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ITALY AND GREECE

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A GARDEN AT CADENABBIA, LAKE COMO. *Page 4.*

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PEEPS AT MANY LANDS
ill.

ITALY

BY JOHN FINNEMORE

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AND

GREECE

BY EDITH A. BROWNE

WITH SIXTEEN FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS
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By John Finnemore

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ITALY

CHAPTER I

OVER THE ALPS TO ITALY

“A land
Which was the mightiest in its old command,
And is the loveliest, and must ever be
The master-mould of Nature's heavenly hand;
Wherein were cast the heroic and the free,
The beautiful, the brave, the lords of earth and sea.”

“The commonwealth of Kings, the men of Rome!
And ever since, and now, fair Italy!
Thou art the garden of the world, the home
Of all Art yields, and Nature can decree;
Even in thy desert, what is like to thee?
Thy very weeds are beautiful, thy waste
More rich than other climes' fertility;
Thy wreck a glory, and thy ruin graced
With an immaculate charm which cannot be defaced.”
Ghilde Harold.

THE traveller of to-day rushes into the most lovely country of Europe by train, through tunnels pierced in the vast mountain chain of the Alps. But travellers

Peeps at Many Lands

of other days did not enter Italy so easily. They climbed out of France or Switzerland by roads which zigzagged up the broad flanks of the mighty hills, traversed lofty passes where winter reigned, and then their road ran down, down to the sunny Italian plain.

This is the true way to enter Italy ; and there are still travellers who pass over the Alps, as all men had to do until the railway engineer ran his tunnels through the vast mountain walls which enclose Italy on the north. With the advent of the motor-car more tourists are beginning to use these ancient ways, and they do not find themselves lonely upon them, for, besides the peasantry of the districts through which they pass, there is, and has always been, a steady stream of traffic over the passes. The Italian workman, the peddler, the wayfarers of the humbler sort, have always stuck to the open road on account of its cheapness. Rather than pay railway fares, or being without the money to do so, they trudge over the Alps.

A trip over an Alpine pass in early summer is of deep interest. Climbing from the Swiss side, our carriage or motor-car mounts steadily by smooth roads cleverly cut in the slopes of the hills, so that the easiest way of ascent is taken. As we rise the air grows colder and colder, and the snow-line draws nearer and nearer. Now the wheels of the carriage crunch and grind over ice and snow, and coats and wraps are drawn closer as the travellers thread the wintry pass.

Here the road is marked by posts which stand above the snow, and glaciers hang high above the path. The greatest danger in the pass is the fall of an avalanche.

Over the Alps to Italy

A field of ice and snow will sometimes break loose from a steep slope and slide down the hillside, carrying all before it. All that comes in its path is engulfed in its rushing mass and overwhelmed. A small avalanche may at times be started by a very slight impulse, such as the rolling of a heavy carriage past the slope where a mass of ice and snow is insecurely resting, or even by voices shouting and singing in the rare thin air, but a small avalanche may prove extremely dangerous.

At last the farther side of the pass is gained, and on a clear day a halt is made to survey the scene. If we are crossing by the Splügen, the famous pass almost in the centre of the Alpine chain, which leads from Switzerland into Italy, we shall enjoy a magnificent prospect. Before us the Alps fall away to the plain of Lombardy, and the vast level, far below, stretches away until it is lost in the blue haze of immense distance.

Now the descent begins. Soon the snow is left behind, and the road winds through rocky gorges, where sombre lines of fir and pine stand rigid on the hillside. Faster and faster rolls our carriage down the easy slope, and as it goes we feel that the air gets softer and softer, and the peasants' cottages are shadowed by walnuts and sweet chestnut-trees. Down again, and wraps are thrown aside, for the keen, biting air of the icy pass is being rapidly exchanged for the glowing heat of summer.

Now the vine begins to appear, the chalets of the hills give place to houses with colonnades, the pointed church spires to tall white campaniles. The plain opens out, spreading under a glorious sky of cloudless

Peeps at Many Lands

blue, its little white-walled hamlets sleeping in the hot sun, its orange-groves perfuming the air. We roll on past ancient towns, whose crumbling walls are embowered in thickets of myrtle, pomegranate and oleander trees. We see the dark, lofty cypress stand, a pillar of dusky shade, against the gleaming white walls of some great villa. We are in Italy.

CHAPTER II

BESIDE AN ITALIAN LAKE

COMING down from the Splügen, the traveller arrives at the shore of Lake Como, and finds himself in the region of the Italian Lakes, those lovely sheets of water whose beauties draw hosts of admirers from all parts of Europe.

Como is a long, narrow lake with arms which run deeply into the recesses of the hills. From whatever point it may be approached, this glorious lake is full of charm, with its spreading sheet of water, blue as the sky which hangs above, its noble mountains which spring high above its shores, the towns and pretty villages which cluster along the shore and dot the pleasant slopes which run down to the water's edge. The roads leading to the lake wind among these white hamlets half hidden in rich vineyards or enfolding woodland, and at every turn of the way fresh views of the most enchanting and romantic beauty hold the traveller spellbound with the witchery of the scene.

Beside an Italian Lake

A soft blue haze envelops woodland, water, and mountain, and gives to every feature of the landscape a dreamy charm which fascinates the beholder.

Afloat, the effect is, if possible, still more striking. The eye is led gently over the smooth sheet of shining blue to the shore, where meadows and orchards and vineyards climb the slopes, past villas whose walls gleam white or pink in the sun, past churches from whose campaniles mellow bells ring out, up to the bold, rocky heights and inaccessible precipices of tall mountains, which tower far above, and whose heads in late spring are still capped with snow.

Nor is the eye ever wearied with gazing, for there is no monotony in the scene. The ever-changing effects of sun and shade, of morning and evening light, of fair weather and of storm, keep up a constant play and interplay of colour and contrast which is a fresh delight from moment to moment.

The shores of Como are dotted with numberless villas and hotels, while a fleet of little boats lies at every landing-place, with merry, dark-eyed boatmen, who are eager to row the visitors about the lake. But it may well happen, as these smiling, active fellows pull your skiff into some quiet, secluded bay, that you see their faces change as their eyes fall on a torpedo-boat lying there with steam up, as if its commander expected to be off at any instant in pursuit of some enemy or evil-doer. And so he does expect, for he is posted there to check smuggling and capture smugglers, and our merry fellows at the oars are often peaceful boatmen by day and smugglers by night.

Peeps at Many Lands

Why is this? It is because Italy is one of the most heavily taxed countries in Europe. Her frontiers bristle with custom-houses, where officers are posted to levy taxes on the goods which come into the country. It is true at home that we also lay duties and taxes on various articles, and yet have but little smuggling. But our duties are laid, in the main, on luxuries, and only slightly on necessities. In Italy a ruthless tax is laid upon the commonest necessities of the poor, as well as the luxuries of the rich. Again, there are certain articles which the Government reserves as monopolies—that is, they can only be bought from the Government officers—and, to obtain money, these articles are sold at high prices, much above their real value. Such things as salt, matches, sugar, petroleum, spirits, and tobacco are so dear that the poorer classes can hardly afford to use them.

Now, the peasantry of Italy are very poor. This most lovely land, with its many fertile plains, is so ill-governed that the people are borne down under a grievous burden of taxation. In many a picturesque hamlet, embowered in vines and olive-groves, where the myrtle gives out its delicious sweetness under a sky of the most enchanting blue, there is bitter and grinding poverty. To take one example, it is a common thing for the peasants to go to bed at sunset in the winter months because the light of a lamp is a luxury which they cannot afford. The Government levies so heavy a duty on petroleum that they are unable to buy it. But across the Swiss frontier, not far away, petroleum is cheap enough, and so are many other things which are very dear in Italy.

Beside an Italian Lake

So the young men find at once both excitement and profit in smuggling cargoes of contraband goods from one country to the other. At dead of night loads of goods are brought down from some lonely pass which leads to the frontier and carried to a solitary creek in the shores of the lake. Here the bales are swiftly embarked, and the boat is driven by strong and skilful oarsmen to some hiding-place, whence its contents will be distributed over the country-side. The smugglers find plenty of customers, for their articles are good, and they sell them at half the price of the regular traders who have had to pay the Government duty.

But what is the Government doing all this time? It is doing its utmost to catch the smugglers, and for that purpose it not only maintains torpedo-boats, on the lake, but also a system of small boats. These small rowing-boats are manned by an officer and a picked crew of five oarsmen, who stand up to row, and drive the boat at great speed as they patrol the creeks, bays, and inlets at all hours of the day and night. Further, a powerful electric light has been placed in position to sweep the lake, and by night this strong searchlight turns its blinding radiance hither and thither in search of suspicious vessels.

How, then, do the smugglers escape through this close-drawn net? Ah! that brings us to another unfortunate point in Italian government. Far too many of its officials are corrupt—they can be bribed to look another way while the Government they have sworn to serve is robbed.

A lake-boat, laden deep in the water, steals out of a

Peeps at Many Lands

little creek ; the searchlight is turned another way as the smugglers glide off into the darkness. An officer is on patrol ; he searches all inlets on his beat save one. He knows perfectly well what that inlet holds. Nay, more, an officer has been known to be present at a run of smuggled goods, and to carefully count each bale and package to be sure that the smugglers handed over to him his proper share of the illegal gains. It is no wonder that smuggling flourishes along Lake Como.

As a visitor is being rowed along the lake, his boatman will often open a secret locker and bring out smuggled tobacco or cigars or other goods, and beg him to buy. But those who know the men best declare that it is very wrong to encourage them. The money thus easily earned goes in drunkenness and dissipation, and is a source of great harm to the smuggler himself.

At some points of the lake, great walls of rock spring sheer from the water and tower hundreds of feet above. On a hot day it is delightful to lie in the shadow of these precipices or row gently along their base. But caution is needed, for danger may be near. Very often there is a meadow on top of the rock far above. The peasants cut their hay in the meadows, dry it, and collect it in small stacks. On each stack is placed a boulder of rock or a big stone to prevent the hay being whirled over the precipice by a sudden storm of wind. When the peasant carries the hay from the meadow, he hurls the stones down the slopes, and they bound along and leap over the precipice, and plunge into the water far below with terrific force. Very often the overhang-

Beside an Italian Lake

ing rocks hide from his view the boat on the lake, and it is no pleasant experience for those in the skiff to see a huge stone whistle upon them and crash into the water near at hand.

The boatmen are also fishermen, for Lake Como abounds in fish. Splendid trout are taken in the nets up to twenty pounds in weight, and there are huge pike, with perch, tench, and other fish. At night you may often hear a pleasant sound of bells chiming softly from the bosom of the lake. They are the bells which the fisherman has fastened to floats to mark the position of his nets, to guide him to them in the darkness. Striking, too, is the sight of the boat which glides along in the shallow water near the shore with a great torch flaring in the bows. The light falls upon a fisherman who stands beside it with a spear in his hands. Now and again he darts his spear swiftly into the water, and strikes a fish which has been attracted by the light. There is a gleam of silver as the fish is tossed inboard, and then the fisherman poises himself anew for a fresh stroke. The thing looks perfectly simple, but is by no means so. The raw hand is likely, not only to miss his fish, but may easily overbalance himself and topple headlong into the water.

Peeps at Many Lands

CHAPTER III

BESIDE AN ITALIAN LAKE (*continued*)

OF the numberless villas along the shores of Lake Como, none is more interesting than the Villa of Pliny at the southern end of the lake. It takes its name from the famous Roman writer, the younger Pliny, who loved to escape from the corrupt and violent life of Rome under the Empire, and give himself up to the quiet delights of a country house amid these beautiful scenes.

Many others of the old Romans felt the charm of Como, and the lakeside was dotted by their villas. Pliny possessed several such retreats along its shores, but his name clings to this southern corner, where a splendid villa stands in a most striking position.

The Villa of Pliny is lapped in front by the waters of the lake, and behind, the hillside springs up like a wall, but a wall thickly covered with woods. So shrouded and overhung by mountains and crags is this great building that for a great part of the year it is sunless. In the height of summer the sun falls upon its front only for a few hours of the day, and a deep silence always broods over this place, standing alone in solitary grandeur.

The present house is not that which was inhabited by the great Roman philosopher. It was erected in 1570 by a great Italian noble, and has passed through

Beside an Italian Lake

various hands. It is only used for a few weeks in the year. During the most intense heat of summer it is pleasant ; at other times it is too damp and cold.

The villa has kept its connexion with the name of Pliny because of its mysterious spring, which puzzled Pliny so much, and whose movements no one can explain to-day. The marvel of this spring is its ebb and flow, and the words of Pliny, who saw it and described it nearly two thousand years ago, are just as true as ever. He says: "A spring rises in the mountain, runs down among the rocks, and is received in an artificial chamber, where one can take one's midday meal. After a short halt there, it falls into the Lake of Como. Its nature is extraordinary. Three times in the day it increases and decreases with regular rise and fall. This is plainly visible, and most interesting to watch. You lie beside it and eat your food, while you drink of the spring itself, which is intensely cold. Meantime it either rises or falls with sure and measured movements. Place a ring, or any other article you please, upon a dry spot. The water reaches and, at length, covers it ; again it slowly retires and leaves the object dry. If you watch long enough, you may see this process repeated a second and a third time."

A few miles away there is another wonderful spring, known as the Fiume di Latte (the Stream of Milk). This is a cascade of milk-white water, which bursts from a cavern in the hillside and rushes down into the lake. This, too, ebbs and flows, though not so regularly as Pliny's Spring. One day the waterfall is a rushing torrent ; the next it has reduced its flow ; the

Peeps at Many Lands

next it is almost dry. Then, just as suddenly, it bursts out again in all its former volume. Nor can these changes be dependent on the melting of snow and ice, for the torrent has been known to descend with summer force in mid-winter, and to disappear in summer when the snow-fields are melting fast. "The water of Fiume di Latte is of an icy coldness, so much so that fruit, meat, fish, or other perishable articles can be kept fresh in it for days during the hottest weather."

The excursion to Fiume di Latte is usually made from the little town of Varenna, nestling under a wooded hill and facing the sun. The hill is crowned by a tower, the last fragment of a castle, where Theodolinda, Queen of Lombardy, once dwelt. Theodolinda is a famous name in early Italian history, and she was the daughter of a King of Bavaria. In the sixth century Flavius, King of the Lombards, sent to ask for the hand of Theodolinda. He had never seen her, and in order to gain a glimpse of the lady before committing himself finally to the marriage, he accompanied his Ambassadors in disguise.

But so great was the beauty and charm of Theodolinda that Flavius loved her at first sight, and she loved him. Within a year after the marriage Flavius died suddenly, and Theodolinda was left alone to rule over Lombardy. By this time the Lombards loved her so much that they said they would accept as their King anyone whom she might choose as a second husband. She married the Duke of Turin, and converted him to Christianity, for he had been a pagan and an avowed enemy to the Pope, St. Gregory the Great. St. Gregory

Beside an Italian Lake

was so delighted with this happy change of a powerful enemy into a friend that he sent to Theodolinda a fillet of iron, believed to have been made from one of the nails used on the Cross.

From this present springs the oldest and most famous crown in the world, the Iron Crown of Lombardy. The fillet of iron was placed in a gold crown, and the diadem is carefully preserved at the Cathedral of Monza. When the present King of Italy followed his murdered father, he took the oath and spoke to his people with the Iron Crown of Lombardy on his head.

Bellagio, the haunt of tourists, is a picturesque little town standing on a bold promontory. The view from the headland is of marvellous beauty, and embraces a vast stretch of the lake. This part of the lake is subject to sudden storms, and near Bellagio a newly-married Queen with all her bridal train was once nearly lost. In 1493 Bianca Sforza, daughter of the Duke and Duchess of Milan, was married with great pomp and splendour to the King of the Romans. On the fourth day after her marriage Bianca, travelling to rejoin her husband, who had gone to prepare a suitable reception for her in his Empire, embarked on the Lake of Como in a magnificent State galley driven by forty picked rowers. Thirty other vessels, filled with her train and escort, followed the splendid barge. Bellagio was reached in safety, and the night spent there. The next morning the galleys had scarcely left the shore when a sudden and terrible storm lashed the lake into foam. All day the rowers strove to urge the galley back to the land, but their efforts were vain, and it was nightfall

Peeps at Many Lands

before the bride regained Bellagio, after a day of fearful tempest.

In the next century a lady of the same house might have been Queen of England had she wished. Henry VIII. wished to marry the Duchess Cristina Sforza, but that lady was too clever for him, and made the delightful and witty reply "that unfortunately she had only one head; but that, had she two, one of them should be at the King of England's service."

CHAPTER IV

THE LOMBARD PLAIN

AT the southern foot of the Alps we find "that vast tract that lies between the Alps and the Adriatic Sea, and which is still distinguished by the vague appellation of Lombardy. This beautiful plain, fenced, as it were, by its snowy ridges, smiling like a garden, spreading like an ocean, with a hundred rivers rushing from the hills, a hundred towns glittering on the plain, exhibits all the vigour of eternal youth."

The Lombard Plain forms the most wealthy and prosperous district of Italy. The land is better cultivated than in the southern parts of the peninsula; the townspeople are more alert and enterprising. The Lombard of old days was well known as a merchant and a money-changer; the Lombard to-day is a keen business man, and thrives in whatever pursuit he may undertake. The plain contains many important towns,

The Lombard Plain

chief among them being Milan, one of the greatest of Italian cities. The glory of Milan is its magnificent cathedral, the Duomo, a glorious building of white marble. Seen in the bright Italian sunshine, the great building is a dazzling picture of wonderful beauty. It is covered from pavement to tower with statues and richly-wrought sculpture, and from every corner spring sharp spires of glittering white marble. The whole mass looks like a beautiful piece of frost-work which has been rendered permanent. This impression becomes stronger when we learn that the design of this noble building was taken from the form of Monte Rosa, the great Alp which lies in sight of the cathedral. The spires of the Duomo resemble in the most striking fashion the sharp splinters of icy crags which spring from the shoulders of the great mountain. "On a clear day the view, from the roof, of the Alps is a sight neither to be forgotten nor described. The huge mass of Monte Rosa, shining like silver in the sun, is perhaps the most conspicuous feature, with many of the higher peaks around Zermatt. Behind rise the tips of the loftier peaks of the Bernese Oberland. In the middle distance is the Plain of Lombardy, with its white towns and villages, each with its church and campanile. In the foreground, surrounding the cathedral, lies the city, with its streets and houses, churches, palaces, and theatres."

The word "theatres" brings to mind the immense opera-house, La Scala, of which the Milanese are so proud. This famous building has for more than a hundred years been in the forefront in bringing out

Peeps at Many Lands

great operas and wonderful singers, and the greatest of the latter do not consider their careers complete until they have sung at La Scala.

But Milan was famous for music long before La Scala was built. It was at Milan that Mozart brought out his first opera when he was only fourteen years old. This wonderful genius wrote music in his infancy, and at fourteen was a master. But when his opera was nearly finished there was a panic among those who were to bring it out. The great prima donna, the chief singer, was not willing to appear. How was it likely, she asked, that a little boy of fourteen could compose music fit for her to sing? The music was shown her. She tried it over, and her astonishment was complete. It was lovely, and she was now eager to take the part. The first night came, and the opera was given. It was a triumphant success, and the vast and delighted audience cheered to the very echo the little boy who came forward to make his bow as the composer of the opera.

Leaving the city for the plains, we find Lombardy a land full of charm. The road winds by hills clothed with chestnut and tulip trees, and crested with cypress and olive. Campaniles and towers shine white from amid the bright green of the vineyards, and under the hedges trail the broad leaves of the water-melon, half shading the great fruit swelling in the sun. Then the road turns under a dark portal in old grey walls, and enters an ancient town, and wanders through it, and out into the open country again.

On every hand lie the holdings of peasant or farmer,

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PLINY, LAKE COMO. Page 10.

The Lombard Plain

and the busy North Italian is to be seen in his fields from dawn to dark, tending his many crops. Here and there long lines of mulberry-trees are growing, for the rearing of silkworms is a great industry of Lombardy. This business is not so prosperous as it formerly was. Disease made dreadful ravages among both the silkworms and the mulberry-trees some half-century ago, and almost killed the silk industry. It has now recovered to a large extent, but the profits are nothing like so large as they used to be.

Another blow at the pocket of the Lombard peasant was a blight which affected the vines, and destroyed almost all the vineyards of Lombardy. A new stock of hardier vines has now been planted, and the wine trade is making way steadily.

But of all the terrors of the North Italian farmer, none is so dreadful as hail. Sometimes, on a summer day, when the crops are in full growth and everything looks promising for a plentiful harvest, a vast black cloud draws over the sky. The storm bursts in thunder, lightning, and heavy hailstones. The latter fall with such terrific force that often within ten to fifteen minutes they will destroy the whole of the standing crops, leaving the fields a whitened desert. Nor can the prudent protect themselves against this dreadful danger. So widespread are the ravages of hail that insurance companies will not insure farmers against it.

But of late science has begun to assist the unfortunate people who thus see the labours of many months destroyed in a few minutes. Cannons are fired at the

Peeps at Many Lands

storm-clouds to burst them. The cannons are shaped like sugar-loaves, and are loaded with a special kind of powder. When the storm threatens, the cannons are discharged and the hail falls, not in the form of the dreaded lumps of ice, but as fine snow or sharp sleet. "In stormy summer weather a stranger in Northern Italy would think himself on a battle-field from the noise of artillery which he hears all around him."

The Lombard peasant lives in the most frugal fashion. His morning meal is of polenta, made of maize flour, and this he washes down with water. His dinner is of soup made of rice thickened with cabbages and turnips, and a little lard mingled with it to give a flavour. He also takes raw vegetables with oil and vinegar, and the day when he adds eggs, cheese, and dried fish to his bill of fare is looked upon as a time of feasting. Butcher's meat he scarcely ever buys, except for a grand affair such as a wedding ; but he searches the fields and hedgerows for hedgehogs, frogs, and snails, and the latter in many parts are considered great delicacies. The wine which he used to drink freely has now become a luxury. Disease among the vines has caused the common wine of the country to become much dearer, and he does not taste it except on feast-days.

The Queen of the Adriatic

CHAPTER V

THE QUEEN OF THE ADRIATIC

FROM Lombardy the railway runs on eastward across the plains, which soon become a marsh with long, coarse grass waving about little lakes and long, winding pools of water between banks of sand. The east wind brings a fresh salt tang from the sea, and we know that the Adriatic is at hand, and look out and see the broad, bright lagoon spread before us. And, rising in the distance over the blue waves, a host of towers, domes, and campaniles spring skywards, lifting themselves, as it were, from the bosom of the sea. It is Venice. "There stands the city of St. Mark—miraculous, a thing for giants to wonder at, and fairies to copy if they could!

"The wonder leaps upon the traveller all at once, arriving over the broad plains of Italy, through fields of wheat and gardens of olives, through vineyards and swamps of growing rice, across broad rivers and monotonous flats of richest land. The means of arrival, indeed, are commonplace enough; but, lo! in a moment you step out of the commonplace railway-station into the lucid stillness of the water city—into poetry and wonderland.

"The moon rising above shines upon pale palaces, dim and splendid, and breaks in silver arrows and broad gleams of whiteness upon the ripple and soft glistening

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movement of the canal, still, yet alive with a hundred reflections, and a soft pulsation and twinkle of life. The lights glitter above and below—every star, every lamp doubled. Then comes the measured sweep of the oars, and you are away on the silent, splendid road, all darkling, yet alive. Not a sound less harmonious and musical than the soft plash of the water against the marble steps and grey walls, the waves' plash against your boat, the wild cry of the boatmen as they round each sharp corner, or the singing of some wandering boatful of musicians on the Grand Canal, disturbs the quiet. Across the flat Lido, from the Adriatic, comes a little breath of fresh wind; and when, out of a maze of narrow water-lanes, you shoot out into the breadth and glorious moonlight of the Grand Canal, and see the lagoon go widening out, a plain of dazzling silver, into the distance, and great churches and palaces standing up pale against the light, what words can describe the novel, beautiful scene!"

The Grand Canal of Venice is the most splendid of the myriad waterways which thread this city of the sea. The Rialto, the most beautiful bridge of Venice, crosses it in a single span, and it is lined on either hand with the splendid homes of the ancient Venetian nobility. It is the most wonderful street in the world: its houses are palaces, its carriages are gondolas, its buses are steamboats, the waves lap its doorsteps. Hundreds of other canals branch out in every direction, and serve as streets to this silent city where no wheels roll, no whips crack, and where the toot of the motor-car is not

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heard. Whence sprung this wondrous city of the waters?

More than fifteen hundred years ago there were troublous times in Lombardy. Barbarian hordes from the north swept into the fruitful plain, and harried it with fire and sword. Fleeing before these savage invaders, a people called the Veneti took refuge on the mud-banks which lay amid the lagoon at the mouth of the River Lido. Here they built their huts of mud and wattle, became fishermen, and lived in safety.

In time they became sailors and traders. None knew the waterways and lagoons as they did, nowhere could be found more bold and skilful seamen. Venice grew rapidly, and formed herself into a republic. Century after century passed, and she prospered in marvellous fashion. Her merchants became nobles, her ruler a great Prince called the Doge, the Duke of Venice. Through her hands passed the commerce between Europe and the East, and vast wealth was gained by her sons.

This wealth they used to beautify the city which they loved so much. Into every mud-bank and ooze-spit piles were driven until a sound foundation had been secured. Upon these foundations rose splendid palaces and noble churches, built of stone, of coloured marble, of every material that was rich and rare. And when these glorious buildings were finished they were decorated within and without by painters, sculptors, workers in mosaic, and enriched by the treasures which the Venetian navies brought home from every city which they seized and sacked.

Peeps at Many Lands

Nowhere can this burning passion to adorn their beloved city be better traced than in the famous San Marco, the Church of St. Mark, the Cathedral of Venice. St. Mark's is one of the wonders of the world, and its piazza is always haunted by lovers of the beautiful, gazing upon this marvellous building, and entering to see the glories within. From the square it scarcely looks like a church. It has no towers, no spires, and is crowned with domes like a mosque. Its porticoes gleam with mosaics on a ground of gold, and four magnificent horses, cast in bronze, rear themselves before an immense stained-glass window. Its pillars are of porphyry and ancient marbles, its gables are adorned with splendid statues, and it is beautified with a thousand spoils of wealth and art seized in the days of the greatness of Venice. "A strange and mysterious, exquisite and barbaric building, an immense heaping up of riches, a pirates' church formed of pieces, stolen or won from every civilization."

"When one enters from the bright sun, St. Mark's appears dim and dark. At first you can see nothing ; but as your eyes become accustomed to the darkness, colours begin to grow upon you out of the gloom. Some minutes must elapse before you realize that the floor, which at first you took to be of deep-toned grey stone, is a mosaic composed of thousands of differently coloured marbles—that you are walking on precious marbles of peacock hues. Golden gleams above your head attract you to the domed ceiling, and, to your delight and amazement, you discover that it is formed entirely of gold mosaic. You are passing a dim recess,

The Queen of the Adriatic

and you see a blurred mass of rich colour ; after a time you realize that you are looking at a famous masterpiece by one of the great Italian painters. You sit there as in a dream ; and one by one the pictures and the mosaics, the Gothic images, the cupolas, the arches, the marbles, the alabaster, the porphyry, and the jasper appear to you—until what was darkness and gloom appears to be teeming and vibrating with colour."

In a dim and hidden corner of this great church stands a quaint little statue to which a story hangs. It is the figure of an old man, leaning on crutches, with a finger on his lip. He it was who built St. Mark's, and he was brought to Venice from the East, for his renown as an architect had spread far and wide. He was a dwarf, ugly and bow-legged ; but he agreed to build the splendid church on condition that one of its chief ornaments should be a statue of himself, and the Doge was compelled to assent. But one day the Doge heard the old man mutter to himself that he could not build the place just in the way he wished. "Then," said the Doge, "I am free from my promise." And he put up only a small statue of the great architect in a hidden corner.

The Palace of the Doges is still to be seen, but the name and power of the Dukes of Venice have long since departed. In old days there was no more splendid sight than the annual feast, when the Doge went in state to acknowledge the union of the splendid city with the sea, which was at once its protection and its source of wealth. Rowed in the State barge, and attended by the splendid vessels of the Venetian nobles,

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he went to a certain spot, and there dropped into the waters a ring of priceless value as a token that Venice was the bride of the sea.

Springing across a canal beside the Palace of the Doges is the most famous bridge of Venice, the Bridge of Sighs. It leads from the State palace to the State prison, and across it has been led many a prisoner who, with a despairing sigh, took from its windows a last glimpse of the sunny world of freedom, for before him lay either a cruel death or imprisonment for life in the gloomy dungeons where no ray of sunshine ever fell.

CHAPTER VI

IN TUSCANY

THE province of Tuscany lies between the Northern Apennines and the Mediterranean, and is a delightful land of little olive-crowned hills, of quaint cities, grey-walled and sun-browned, lying in the green lap of meadows and vineyards, while far away snowy mountain tops close in the lovely scene. Within her borders lie some of the most famous cities of Italy, and her tongue is that adopted as correct Italian.

There is a bewildering confusion of tongues in Italy. Each province has not only its own mode of speech, but many local dialects as well. These often differ so widely from each other that an uneducated man, speaking only his own local Italian, is often at sea when quite



ENTRANCE TO THE GRAND CANAL, VENICE. *Page 20.*

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In Tuscany

a short distance from home, and fails to understand the people. As one writer remarks, "A mountain, a hedge, a running brook is sufficient to mark off a new language." Some time ago an Italian writer published a volume containing one story of Boccaccio translated into about seven hundred different dialects of the peninsula.

The Tuscan tongue is the general speech when educated people from different parts of Italy meet, but it does not follow that they use it at home. With the exception of Rome, they would drop into their own local speech, and that would be quite beyond the power of a foreigner to grasp, even if he were an excellent Italian scholar in the usual sense of the word.

This pleasant land is tilled by the dark-eyed, handsome Tuscan peasantry, whose little villages with simple houses of stone dot the landscape in all directions. Their ploughs and carts are drawn by the splendid white oxen of Tuscany, and where the ground is too steep or too rough for wheels to run, the oxen are harnessed to the *treggia*, a kind of rude sleigh. It is formed of a small platform attached to a bent shaft, and the oxen are fastened on either side of the shaft, the latter running up between the two animals. When the sleigh is intended to carry passengers, a large basket is strapped to it. The basket contains a seat for two people, and is fitted with a slanting back and cushion. When going up a hill-side with a pair of oxen pulling slowly and steadily, the motion is not unpleasing. But coming down is a very different affair. The *treggia* rocks and bumps and lurches until the occupants fear they will

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be shaken to pieces, and think it would be better to get out and walk.

The chief river of Tuscany is that famous stream, the Arno, on which stand Florence and Pisa. Florence is a very great city to-day, and of her we shall speak again. Pisa has seen the days of her greatness pass, and she is now a quiet, dreamy place, visited by those who wish to see the wonderful buildings which cluster round a corner of her ancient walls.

Here lies an open grassy space where stand four splendid structures. The first that catches the eye is the famous Leaning Tower. It looks familiar at once, for you have seen so many pictures of it. Apart from its curious position, it is noteworthy for its own charm. "It looks like some fairy tower, composed of tier upon tier of marble columns and delicate tracery, and inclines gently forward, as though weary of the burden of its own beauty."

The Leaning Tower springs 179 feet from the ground in the form of a vast pillar. It is hollow within, and when you enter and stand at the foot it seems as if you were at the bottom of a deep well, with the bells—for it is the campanile, or belfry, of the Cathedral near at hand—hanging at the top. In the circular wall is a flight of 300 steps leading to the top, whence you may enjoy a splendid outlook over mountain, plain, and sea.

As you ascend you can clearly perceive that the tower is not upright, and it leans over to one side to the extent of 13 feet. This was caused by the giving way of part of the foundation. But for all that, the

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tower remains firm and strong. It has stood since 1174, and seems likely to stand.

The Cathedral, the Baptistery, and the Campo Santo complete the four famous structures. The Cathedral and the Baptistery are most beautiful buildings, and the Campo Santo is reared upon sacred earth—upon 1,500 loads of soil brought from Calvary long ago. In the Cathedral is a very ancient and famous picture of the Madonna and Child, which is covered with seven veils, and these veils are never removed save upon very important occasions. The shrine where this picture is kept is surrounded by many offerings. This is a common practice in the churches of Italy. A worshipper prays for a blessing or for deliverance from some peril, and if he believes that his prayer is granted he puts up before the shrine some object to commemorate the favour received. Thus a sailor, saved from shipwreck, puts up a silver model of a ship before his favourite saint; the lame man, recovering from his infirmity, hangs up his crutches, and so on.

In the Cathedral of Pisa there hangs a little pink frock before the shrine. It has hung there since the last unveiling of the picture in 1897. On that occasion a terrible disaster occurred. The church was packed to overflowing, when a cry of "Fire!" was raised, and there was a wild stampede. People were trampled to death, and many were badly injured. "One poor mother was knocked down, and her little child, not two years old, was whirled away from her among the struggling crowd, she saw not whither. When the

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ambulance came from the neighbouring hospital to recover the dead and wounded, the child was found under a bench, smiling and happy, a little dazed, but without so much as a bruise. The grateful mother has put the little pink frock it wore at the time in a glass case and placed it in the Cathedral, thereby rendering public thanks to Heaven for so marvellous an escape."

Before leaving Pisa, we must note one very interesting local feature—the fine herd of camels which have become native to the Tuscan soil. In the neighbourhood of the town a camel-train is no uncommon sight, each long-legged, humped creature marching steadily along with its load of about 1,000 pounds of wood, cut in the forests near at hand. These camels have been bred near Pisa for close upon 200 years. Many attempts have been made to rear camels in other parts of Italy, but in vain, nor can they be reared elsewhere in Tuscany than at Pisa. Camels need a hot and dry climate. Cold and wet will kill them off rapidly. Above all things, the camels dislike rain. If they are in the open, they huddle together closely under trees. If they are in their sheds, they will not come out on a rainy day, even though their food-racks are empty and there is plenty to eat outside.

But now we must leave Pisa, and go up-stream to the most famous Tuscan city of all, Florence, the City of Flowers.

The City of Flowers

CHAPTER VII

THE CITY OF FLOWERS

THE famous and beautiful city of Florence lies on the banks of the River Arno, surrounded by smiling slopes where vineyards and orchards are set thickly among meadows and corn-fields, and looked upon from afar off by the lofty Apennines. But she is famous for much more than the beauty of her position, this stately and splendid old city. She is famous for her noble palaces, her quaint and picturesque streets, her wonderful churches, and for the wealth of art treasures in picture and statue, in bronze and marble, with which her sons have enriched her.

Her story is long and very stormy. For centuries the streets rang with the noise of battle. She was a small republic where rival parties fought for supremacy, and dyed her streets and walls with their blood. Her history rings with the long strife of the two great rival families, Guelf against Ghibelline, whose struggles rent her in twain, and whose bitter combats were fought out in her narrow causeways.

But Florence had other sons who have given her greater fame than either Guelf or Ghibelline. To-day the noise of the far-off battles is dim, and their dust has settled and covered the renown of the warriors; but the world still reads the poems of Dante, greatest of the sons of Florence, and admires the books and

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pictures of other Florentines, lesser men than the great poet, but still men of world-wide fame.

We can take but a peep at this city of marvellous charm, and we will go straight to its famous Piazza del Duomo—the “history-haunted square,” as Ruskin calls it—and glance round a group of buildings scarcely to be equalled in any other city of the world. Here stand the Cathedral, the Campanile, the splendid belfry, and the Baptistery.

The Cathedral, the Duomo of Florence, is a great and noble building entered by several doors, all different and all beautiful. Inside there is no glare of splendour, only vast, dim, tranquil spaces, so that one steps out of a bustling, sunny piazza into a grey quietude which seems far off and distant from the workaday world, and full of repose and devotion.

High overhead springs the vast arch of the lofty dome, which is covered outside with red tiles, and is a great landmark, as it rises above the roofs of the city. It is a noble piece of work, inlaid with coloured marbles, and enriched with splendid carvings and statues.

Beside the Cathedral stands the Shepherd's Tower, the belfry of glorious beauty designed by Giotto, the shepherd-boy. Ruskin calls it “that serene height of mountain alabaster, coloured like a morning cloud and chased like a sea-shell.”

The Campanile is adorned with many-coloured marbles, the delicate and lovely shades running from purest white to crimson and green and onyx, with noble statues and beautiful medallions. Giotto designed

The City of Flowers

it, and it was beautified by other immortals of Florence who lived in the golden age of Florentine art. Since the fourteenth century the Campanile has stood and served the purpose which it serves to-day. The bells call the citizens to prayer, and thrice a day it gives the signal for the *Ave Maria* to all the other city towers.

The Baptistery of Florence stands across the square—the venerable Church of St. John the Baptist, where still the tiny Florentines are brought to the font and made children of the Church. In this most ancient and beautiful place the Florentines, whose names are famous for ever, were brought to the priest, and were baptized in the shadow of the great bronze figure of St. John, who raises his hands in blessing. The glory of the Baptistery is its famous bronze doors, wrought with so much beauty that Michael Angelo declared them worthy to be the gates of Paradise.

Near at hand is a plain building, the home of the most striking institution of Florence, the Misericordia, the Brothers of Mercy. In this brotherhood vast numbers are enrolled of all ranks, from King to beggar, and it is their duty to succour the sick, to carry the injured to hospital, to bear the dead to the grave. A number of the brothers are always ready for duty, and, as soon as a call comes for their services, they don black robes with a curious pointed hood which conceals the face, and take up the litter which is at hand, and hasten to their task.

There is no more familiar sight in the city than the small procession, robed in solemn black, which swings

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along with its litter shoulder high, and is greeted everywhere with the doffed hat. If the burden be a corpse, the procession is formed as night falls, and is a most striking scene. In front goes a priest with crucifix and light, repeating, as he walks, the Burial Psalm. The Brothers of Mercy make the responses as they march, the bearing party with their shoulders under the bier, and those who are to relieve them and carry in turn, holding great blazing torches which light the way. No one knows the name or rank of the brethren on duty, nor may anyone offer the latter the smallest reward save "a cup of cold water."

The centre of Florentine city life is the splendid square where stands the Palazzo Vecchio, the grand old palace raised nearly seven hundred years ago as a residence for the Chief Magistrate of Justice. In front of this grim and powerful fortress, with its great and noble tower, the life of Florence ebbs and flows to-day, as it has done for so many centuries. The history of the city clings closely about this grand old building, which has seen riots, revolts, executions, scenes of public and private torture; has been the home of Chief Magistrates or of Grand Dukes, as forms of Government changed; and is now occupied by the council which deals with the municipal affairs of Florence.

The square before it seethes with Florentine life—above all on Fridays, when, after market, a vast throng of townspeople and peasants from the country round about pack it full from side to side. "As a rule, the Tuscan peasant is a graceful specimen of humanity, dark and intelligent-looking, with a delightful habit of

The City of Flowers

gesticulating with his hands in a manner which makes it almost possible for him to dispense with words. In winter these peasants wear long coats in wonderful shades of bright brown and a peculiar vivid green, with collars and cuffs of fur, and in summer they are clad from head to foot in cool linen. Among the gesticulating groups, cabs and carriages, with much shouting and cracking of whips, slowly thread their way, scattering to right and left the ever-shifting, brightly-coloured crowd."

The square is decorated with some of the grandest statues of Florence, but there is also a plain slab of stone in the pavement before the palace which draws much attention. This slab marks the spot where Savonarola, the great preacher and reformer, was put to death in 1498. Savonarola was the Prior of the Convent of St. Mark, and his soul was greatly troubled by the wickedness of the time. Florence was ruled by Lorenzo the Magnificent, and the city stood at the height of its power and the zenith of its glory. But Lorenzo, his Court, and his people, were wicked and corrupt, and Savonarola thundered against the evils of the time, and tried to turn men to better and purer ways.

So great was his eloquence that men were forced to listen to him and heed his words. For a time it seemed as if he were about to succeed, and turn the Florentines from their evil lives. But his foes proved too many and too strong for him. The rulers of his own Church were as bitter against him as any, and in the end he was condemned to death. Accompanied by two faithful

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monks, who died with their master, Savonarola was burned at the stake, and his ashes were cast into the Arno.

CHAPTER VIII

SOME FLORENTINE CUSTOMS

THE Florentines have plenty of holidays and feast-days, and, like all other Tuscans, they are a laughing, pleasure-loving people. The fun of their year commences with the carnival which begins at Christmas and lasts until Shrove Tuesday. This is the great season of merry-making, when parties and entertainments are given, and the stalls are loaded with toys and sweets for children. But the great day of the children's feast is Epiphany—"Twelfth Day," the day before Old Christmas Day. This festival corresponds with that of "Santa Claus" in Northern Europe. The children put their shoes ready, and hope that during the night "La Befana" will fill them with gifts. "La Befana" is an old woman who roams over the earth for ever, like the Wandering Jew, and on the night of Epiphany she fills the shoes of all good children with pretty things. Then the children always go to the Epiphany fair, where they buy little glass trumpets and fill the air with shrill blasts.

As soon as Lent begins, all popular festivities cease. But now the people throng to the Lenten fairs, which are held every Sunday at one or other of the city gates.

Some Florentine Customs

At these fairs there are sold all sorts of sweetmeats and cakes and trinkets, chief among the eatables being nuts which have been blessed by the priest, and little cakes which can be obtained only at this time of the year. The first three fairs are known as the "Fair of the Curious," the "Fair of the Furious," and the "Fair of the Lovers." The fourth is the least important of the series, and the fifth is the most important, and causes much excitement among the Florentines. It is the "Fair of Contracts," and here forthcoming marriages are announced, and the happy couples are present to receive the congratulations and good wishes of their friends. The sixth is called the "Fair of the Rejected," where disappointed lovers console themselves as well as they may.

But no one takes much thought of them, for now every mind is fixed on the greatest festival of the Florentine year, the world-famous "Feast of the Dove." On Easter Eve a car is set aflame by a dove, and in this ceremony of the "Burning of the Car" not only is every Florentine interested, but every peasant throughout Tuscany; for there is a fixed belief in every peasant mind that just as the ceremony goes well or ill, so will their crops go well or ill that year.

The origin of this curious custom goes back to the First Crusade, when a young knight of Florence brought back from the Holy Land some of the sacred fire which is kindled every Easter Eve in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem. There are two stories which tell of the manner in which he conveyed this precious fire to his native city. One says that he rode his horse

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backward in order to shield the flame with his body ; another says that he enclosed it in an iron ball, which he rolled along with his foot. But both stories agree that when he reached Florence the people thought his movements so strange that they ran after him, shouting "Pazzo ! Pazzo !" — "Madman ! Madman !" In this manner the knight's family gained the name of the Pazzi, a celebrated name in Italian history.

From that day to this on every Easter Eve has been celebrated the "Burning of the Car" with sacred fire. The ceremony is as popular to-day as it was in the Middle Ages, and from early morning vast crowds of peasants, townsfolk, and sightseers pack themselves into the Piazza del' Duomo, in front of the great west door of the Cathedral.

The car is a huge wooden affair, festooned with fireworks and decorated with ribbons in the national colours of Italy—red, white, and green. It is drawn through the streets by four oxen white as milk, whose horns are tipped with gold. It halts before the Cathedral in the midst of the expectant crowd, who await the coming of the dove. The peasants are breathless with excitement and anxiety. If the car be set on fire bravely, the harvest will be good and abundant ; if the fire fails, then corn and fruit, too, will fail. No one can tear this belief from the heart of the Tuscan *contadine*.

The little white dove is purely artificial, and it slides along a wire which runs from the high altar along the Cathedral, out through the west door, and straight to the top of the car. At that point of the Mass

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where the Archbishop of Florence comes to the *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*—"Glory to God in the Highest"—he sets in motion the dove, which, with a light in its mouth, darts away along the wire towards the car.

Outside there is a breathless silence as the vast crowd waits for the dove to appear. When it shoots out into the sunlight, a tremendous shout of welcome arises, and then a thrice tremendous shout as it is seen that the ceremony is successful, and that the fireworks are blazing and exploding merrily. The dove turns and flies back, followed by the thanks and blessings of the happy peasants, who now look forward to a prosperous year. The oxen are once more yoked to the car, and it is drawn to the palace of the Pazzi, where more fireworks are exploded in honour of the great Crusader, and the "Feast of the Dove" is over.

CHAPTER IX

AMONG THE APENNINES

THE Apennines form the backbone of Italy, and almost everywhere may be seen from the plains which lie between their broad flanks and the coast. The peasants who live on these great hills are herdsmen rather than farmers, though here and there a strip of corn-field shines golden in autumn on some narrow terrace. This land is not turned with the plough, for on these steep slopes the plough is unknown. It is attacked with the *zappa*, a broad-bladed pick, which is swung

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with great power and driven deeply into the soil, turning it over well.

But, in the main, the meal-sack is filled from the groves of chestnut which stand thick along the hill-sides. The chestnut-gathering is the real harvest of the mountaineers, and it is a very busy time. About the middle of October, old and young troop off to the woods, where the glossy brown chestnuts are showering down freely as the winds of autumn blow. They are well provided with sacks and bags, and wear their oldest clothes, for it is rough work. The forest is often damp and muddy from the rains, the thorns and briars must not frighten the pickers from the underwood, where many nuts have fallen, and if a heavy shower comes they get wet to the skin.

They are very glad when the weather is fine, and then the woods ring with jokes and laughter as the nimble fingers fill the big sacks. A good picker will fill a sack in a day, and a very quick hand will fill a sack and a half. The chestnuts are carried home, dried, and ground, and the meal is used to make the *necci*, the chestnut-flour cakes which form so great a share of the food of the hill-folk. Every house has its drying-room, where the fresh chestnuts are heaped on a wooden framework, below which a wood fire burns. The chestnuts are left in the heat and smoke for three days and nights. The outer husk becomes as black as coal, but this is easily broken off, and the inside is white and sweet and hard. The dried nuts are now ground in a mill, and the meal is packed away in a big press. Here it gets as hard almost as a stone, and on

Among the Apennines

baking-day the portion needed is chopped out with a hatchet or heavy knife.

To make the *necci* the housewife first mixes chestnut-flour and water in a big wooden bowl till she has a paste which looks like thick pink cream. Then she takes an upright iron frame and sets it beside the fireplace, where a number of round flat stones are getting very hot. She has also a pile of large fresh green chestnut-leaves.

She begins by placing a hot stone at the bottom of the iron frame. Upon this she lays some leaves, and upon the leaves she ladles a layer of paste. This she covers with leaves, and now comes another hot stone. And so she goes on with hot stones, leaves, and paste until the frame is full. She leaves the latter for a short time, then unpacks it, for the cakes are soon cooked by the heated stones. The *necci* now look like pieces of pinkish-brown leather, and seem just as tough to the jaws of the stranger. He is certain to have a fit of indigestion if he tries to get through one, but the mountaineers thrive on them.

The children of the hills are very busy little creatures. From an early age they have to do something to help the family fortunes along, and they do it with a will. The boy herds the flock of goats, the girl watches the sheep. If there be no goats to watch, the boy has to look after the cow and cut its food. He is off to the wood with a sack to gather leaves and young shoots, for the mountain cow does not get much grass or hay. In winter it has to get along on dried leaves and ferns.

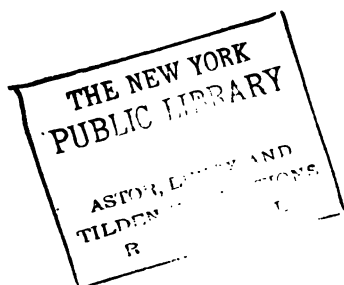
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But the girls have generally a little flock to guard, for a few sheep are of great service to furnish wool. This is spun on the distaff, and supplies the family with stockings and woollen garments. The little shepherdess leads her sheep to the woods, where they feed all day, and very often she has her distaff with her, and sits in the shade and spins. She is very busy, too, at the time of the chestnut-gathering. If her parents do not need her help, there are always people glad of an extra pair of hands. For wages she receives food and lodging during the harvest, and a sack of nuts besides.

The hill-towns are very old. As a rule they are far older than the cities of the plains below. They often cling to the sides of cliffs; they are perched on the top of precipitous rocks, and many a one—

“Like an eagle’s nest
Hangs on the crest
Of purple Apennine.”

The visitor to-day wonders why people ever built in such out-of-the-way spots, so difficult to reach. There are plenty of hill towns and villages among the Apennines to which wheeled carriages may not climb, or only with the greatest difficulty. Mules with heavy packs slung on either side of them do all the carrying of goods, or perhaps sleds drawn by oxen will toil up and down the narrow stony path which leads to the town. And yet, at the foot of the cliff, there may be a pleasant green plain beside a swift river. The cows are driven down to pasture there, the women go down with baskets





PIAZZA DELLA SIGNORIA, WITH THE

Among the Apennines

of clothes to wash them in the clear water ; but at night all climb up again to the fastness above. Why is this ? Why was not the town built at the foot of the precipice instead of on its crest, where the houses are packed close on ledges of rock ?

The reason is that these towns were built in far-off days, when men thought of two things only in fixing upon a spot to raise their dwellings—food and safety. In order to get food, they built their homes near a patch of fertile land, which could be easily cultivated with their simple tools, and, in order to be safe, they placed their houses on the lofty rock which sprang high above the plain. Here they were secure from their enemies, and the compact mass of houses inside the strong wall, which encircled the little city, made a stout fortress. In choosing the hill-top, the early settlers always looked for one which had its own spring or fountain of water. Food is easily stored, but water not so easily, and with a good spring in the town they did not fear thirst even when a powerful enemy cut them off from the river below.

— In our own country the same system may be found, or, rather, remains of the same system. Above a number of our towns there still hang hill-tops which show that old villages once stood up there. For instance, the hill-top of Old Sarum was the beginning of modern Salisbury, the height of Caer Badon was the beginning of modern Bath, and to this day hill-top towns still stand at Shaftesbury and Launceston.'

Now, in England, where attack by foreign foes was not greatly feared, and where fighting at home ceased

Peeps at Many Lands

a long time ago, the people came down from the hill-top to the plain, and lived in greater comfort and convenience. But in Italy times of trouble and war and invasion lasted to far later days than with us, and so the people clung to their fortress homes. It is true that the land is quiet to-day, and yet the Italian hill-town stands on its height just the same as ever, nor do the people make any sign of leaving it. But many of them are poor, and have no means of building new homes, and many are amply satisfied with the simple things that lie within their grasp.

Modern life has left these towns untouched. Their inhabitants do not crave for trams or fine shops, or even good roads. A mule-path brought wine and oil to them centuries ago ; it brings them to-day, and the people are satisfied. Nor do they wish to get down to some highroad or railway, to stand upon a line of traffic, to be in touch with the modern hurry and scurry. Their district is self-supporting and self-contained. They live in it and for it to such an extent that they give the name of "foreigners" not only to people of other lands, but to their fellow-Italians of a neighbouring province.

The Eternal City

CHAPTER X

THE ETERNAL CITY

ABOUT 750 years before the birth of Christ a band of settlers founded a city on the banks of the River Tiber, and that settlement became Rome. Nearly twenty-seven centuries have passed since then, and Rome has been a great and charmed name through all that space of time.

Her early days were of conquest over the surrounding tribes; then her eagles flew farther and farther, and the swords of the Roman legionaries made their city the mistress of the world. Rome, upon her seven hills, was a magnificent city of splendid temples, and in her Forum met soldiers, statesmen, and Senators whose fame is as fresh to-day as when they wrote their great books or delivered their famous speeches.

Time passed, and the power of Rome sank. Her rulers became weak and corrupt, and the mistress of the world was overthrown by hordes of barbarians from the north. But after the Rome of the Cæsars came the Rome of the Popes. The city became the centre of the Christian Church, and for ages she ruled all Christendom with unquestioned sway.

The early days of Christianity in Rome were days of persecution and trial, of imprisonment and martyrdom. The new faith was looked upon as dangerous by the rulers of Rome, and so the cry arose of "The Chris-

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tians to the lions!" Where were the Christians flung to the lions? In the Colosseum, the vast building where the Romans held their games and shows. The ruins of the Colosseum still stand, one of the most famous and striking buildings in existence. It is the example, above all, of the wonderful power of the old Romans as the greatest builders the world has ever seen. It is a huge amphitheatre, where 50,000 spectators could be seated in tier above tier till the topmost row of spectators looked down 160 feet into the arena below. The arena is about 280 feet long by 174 feet wide, and here were given combats of gladiators (men hired to fight with each other), of gladiators with wild beasts, of wild beasts with each other, and of naval battles. For the latter purpose the arena was filled with water and became a lake, on which vessels were launched to engage in fight.

But there was no sight which better pleased the savage multitude than the spectacle of Christian martyrs exposed to wild beasts. The latter were kept without food until they were savage with hunger, and flew upon their victims and tore them to pieces at once. Men, women, and children suffered this cruel death under the eyes of the gazing thousands.

For hundreds of years this mighty building served as a quarry to the builders of Rome. Palaces, churches, theatres have been built from its walls, and yet it stands, immense and impressive. After a time this destruction was checked, yet one Roman Cardinal managed in 1540 to remove vast masses of quarried blocks by a cunning trick. He begged the Pope to

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allow him all the stones he could remove in twelve hours. The permission was given, and he set 4,000 men to the task.

Closely connected with the early Christians are the catacombs, the vast underground caverns hewn out of the rock, forming a "subterranean Rome." They are forty-five in number, and the passages, galleries, and chambers run to hundreds of miles in total length. This great underground city formed a refuge for Christians from their persecutors. Here they buried their dead; here they met for prayer and worship; here they gathered converts to instruct them in the new faith. After the time of persecution was over the catacombs were no longer used, and in time their very existence as Christian retreats was forgotten. Visitors to Rome were told that under the city lay huge and frightful caverns filled with snakes. This belief was common until explorers took the catacombs in hand, and instead of snake-haunted chasms they found galleries of tombs, rooms hollowed in the rock, with a seat for the teacher of those who had met there, inscriptions and pictures of the deepest interest, prayers and names scratched on walls, and frescoes depicting Bible scenes.

From the catacombs to the majestic Church of St. Peter there is no break in the Christian history of Rome. Popes taught and were buried in the catacombs. The Pope rules to-day over St. Peter's, the greatest Christian church in the world. St. Peter's is said to stand on the site of the tomb of St. Peter, and in the year 306 a great church was raised on the spot.

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The Emperor Constantine himself aided in the work, carrying twelve baskets of earth in honour of the Twelve Apostles. For a thousand years the church of Constantine held its place, then it was resolved to raise a grander building.

The foundation-stone of this, the most famous church in Christendom, was laid in 1506. Nearly two hundred years were spent in the building. The famous names of Raphael and Michael Angelo are closely connected with it : Raphael laid out the general plan, and Michael Angelo designed the vast dome, which is the greatest landmark of the city. Of a visit to St. Peter's Bayard Taylor says :

"It seemed a long time before we arrived at the Square of St. Peter's. When at length we stood in front, with the majestic colonnade sweeping round, the fountains on each side sending up their showers of silver spray, the mighty obelisk of Egyptian granite piercing the sky, and beyond, the great front and dome of the cathedral, I confess my unmingled admiration. The front of St. Peter's seemed close to us, but it was a third of a mile distant, and the people ascending the steps dwindled to pigmies. I passed the obelisk, went up the long ascent, crossed the portico, pushed aside the heavy curtain, and stood in the great nave. I need not describe my feelings at the sight, but I will tell you the dimensions, and you may then fancy what they were. Before me was a marble plain, 600 feet long, and under the cross 417 feet wide, and there were 400 feet of air between me and the top of the dome. The sunbeam, stealing through a

The Eternal City

lofty window at one end of the transept, made a bar of light on the blue air, hazy with incense, one-tenth of a mile long, before it fell on the mosaics and gilded shrines of the other extremity. The grand cupola alone, including lantern and cross, is 285 feet high, and the four immense pillars on which it rests are each 137 feet in circumference. It seems as if human art had outdone itself in producing this temple—the grandest which the world ever erected for the worship of the Living Good.”

St. Peter's is full of splendid statues and tombs, and against one of the great piers supporting the dome is a famous bronze statue of St. Peter himself. This statue has always been an object of deep veneration to the crowds of pilgrims who for centuries have thronged to the great church. The right foot has actually been worn away by the kisses of the devout.

Near at hand rises a massive range of buildings—the Vatican, the residence of the Popes. It is the largest palace in the world, or, rather, it is a collection of palaces, museums, picture-galleries, barracks, and offices covered by one name. It may also be called a prison, for the Pope stays in it as if it were a prison, and this is done to mark his displeasure with the present government. When Italy became a united nation, the power of the Pope as a reigning Italian Prince came to an end, and this was deeply resented at the Vatican. Now, the Pope does not move about in his lost possessions, but remains shut up in solitary state at the Vatican.

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CHAPTER XI

THE ETERNAL CITY (*continued*)

A VERY striking relic of Imperial Rome is the Pantheon, a splendid circular building, once a temple of the Roman gods, but since 609 a Christian church. It is the only building of the old Romans which remains entire and in use at the present day:

“Simple, erect, severe, austere, sublime,
Shrine of all saints and temple of all gods.”

This noble hall was raised by the Emperor Hadrian, but the portico is part of the original building erected by Agrippa in 27 B.C. The interior is of noble design. The circular walls are crowned by a dome of most beautiful shape, and the temple is lighted in a strange and charming fashion. Not a window breaks the surface of the walls, but at the very apex of the dome there is a circular opening 28 feet across, which lights the interior perfectly, and with the most magical effects of sun and shade. Standing on the pavement below, and looking up to the blue sky through this opening, it has the appearance of a great eye, and impresses the spectator deeply: it seems “as if heaven were looking down into the interior of the temple.”

Around the walls are niches where the images of the Roman gods once stood: they are now converted into Christian altars. In the Pantheon lies Raphael, the



HADRIAN'S TOMB, THE CASTLE OF S. ANGELO, ROME. *Page 40.*

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The Eternal City

great painter, who died at the age of thirty-seven. It has also been adopted as the burial-place of Italian Sovereigns, and the two Kings who have died since Italy became a united nation lie within its walls.

The finest tomb of Old Rome is a modern castle. The Castle of St. Angelo, whose broad, round tower rises beside the Tiber, is one of the best-known landmarks of Rome. Yet it is but a fragment of the splendid mausoleum raised by Hadrian. The vast tomb became a castle, and for hundreds of years it was held, attacked, partly destroyed, built up again, until it stands to-day a living record of the turbulent days of mediæval Italy.

As for the relics of ancient Rome, they are found, not only in arches and pillars, but literally everywhere, in fragments. The modern city is built upon the ruins of the city of the Cæsars, when palaces of marble rose on every hand, and the most magnificent public buildings, temples, theatres, and baths were built as if intended to last for ever. But the fury of the invading barbarians overthrew most of the ancient monuments, and time has buried them deep under layers of earth and rubbish. Yet to this day fragments of the old splendour are found on every hand. "Every villa, garden, and palace staircase is peopled with ancient statues. Fragments of inscriptions, of carved mouldings and cornices, marble pillars, and antique fountains are met with in every courtyard. Even a humble house or shop will have a marble step or a marble lintel to the front door. To the present day no piece of work is ever undertaken in Rome, no house foundation dug

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or gas-pipe laid, but the workmen come across some ancient masonry, an aqueduct, whose underground course is unknown and unexplored, a branch of one of the great drains, or the immense concrete vault of a bath or temple, whose destruction gives as much trouble as if it were solid rock."

Of the ancient Roman Forum, that famous spot where Cicero spoke and the City Fathers met, some tall columns still stand, and the spade of the digger has cleared away the earth, and we may walk the very pavement which the senators trod. The Forum lies between the two famous hills of the Palatine and the Capitol. The Palatine hill was the cradle of infant Rome, and upon it were raised the huts of the shepherds who founded the city. The Capitol became the fortress and the centre whence Consuls and Senators sent decrees over the world. The Forum was at first a mere swamp, and about 603 B.C. Tarquinius Priscus built cloacæ (huge sewers) to drain off the water. So massive and so perfect was, and is, this ancient masonry that it has served its purpose for nearly 2,500 years, and serves it just as well to-day.

Through the Forum ran the Via Sacra—the Sacred Way—by which a victor marched in triumph to the Capitol. Behind the gay, triumphant train came the poor captives who had lost the day, and whose lives would be sacrificed in honour of the victory. One precipitous face of the Capitol is the Tarpeian Rock, over which traitors were hurled to be dashed to pieces at the foot of the descent.

Near at hand are the two famous triumphal arches

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which are still in good order, the Arch of Constantine and the Arch of Titus. The Arch of Constantine was built in A.D. 312. It is of great size and fine proportions, and is the best preserved of all the triumphal arches of Rome. It is adorned with many fine pieces of work taken from older arches, and is of deep interest as bearing the first inscription which shows that Rome had become Christian. But of even still deeper religious interest is the Arch of Titus.

After the capture of Jerusalem, Titus returned in triumph to Rome, bearing with him the spoils of the Temple, and followed by multitudes of Jewish captives. The Senate decreed that Titus should be honoured by a triumphal arch, and the latter was built at the highest point of the Sacred Way. It is a beautiful arch, but its chief interest lies in the subject of the sculptures which ornament it. For here are shown the sacred trophies torn from the Temple—the seven-branched candlestick, the table of shewbread, the silver trumpet. Another relief shows Titus himself crowned with laurels, and drawn in a four-horse chariot, while a crowd of Jewish leaders are dragged in chains beside his chariot-wheels. It is said that even to-day no Jew will walk beneath this arch, which records the destruction of his people and his Temple.

In all ages Rome has been held by every true Italian heart as the real capital of Italy. Other towns have been looked upon as the capital from time to time, because it was not possible for the ruler of that day to gain possession of Rome. But for many years every Italian has looked with pride upon Rome restored to

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her ancient place as the chief town of his race, and it was fitting that in May, 1915, the proclamation of war against Austria should be made in the Eternal City.

By this proclamation Italy showed her determination to enter the Great European War on the side of the Allied Nations of Britain, France, and Russia. She had hopes, later realized, of winning back at least a part of the Italian territory still held by her old oppressor, Austria. These provinces lie at the north-eastern corner of Italy, round the head of the Adriatic, and the chief town in them is Trieste, the well-known port. Into this earth-shaking war Italy threw the weight of her sword, and her old friendship with England was deepened and strengthened as Briton and Italian stood shoulder to shoulder in the great fight for the freedom of the world from German domination.

CHAPTER XII

THE ROMAN CAMPAGNA

LET us leave Rome by its oldest and most famous road, the Appian Way. This splendid road is formed of immense blocks of stone laid with such perfect exactness that after nearly two thousand years of traffic the time-worn pavement is still sound and good. On either side of the causeway stand tombs, for the old Romans buried their dead and raised monuments to their memory beside the most frequented ways, as if to keep thoughts of the departed in the minds of the living. Most famous of these tombs is that of Cecilia Metella, wife of Crassus, Cæsar's Legate in Gaul. It is

The Roman Campagna

a noble tower, 90 feet high, and resembles a castle-keep. "The stern round tower of other days," as Byron calls it, is not merely one of the finest, but also one of the best-preserved of these ancient monuments.

The Appian Way runs on, and, as we follow it, we find ourselves entering a very lonely and desolate stretch of country. This is the Roman Campagna, the country about Rome. There are no trees, no human habitations, save here and there a little village whose people are white and sickly, worn with fever and consumed by disease. This sickness and desolation are caused by the malarial fever which haunts these wide swampy stretches of country.

Yet once there was no malaria to fear, and the country was smiling and fertile. It is dotted everywhere with ruins, which show that in Roman times seventy cities were scattered over the plain, and that the land between them was covered with farms and villas, the country seats of Consuls, patricians, and Senators. Excellent roads threaded the land, and inns stood at the crossings of the ways, while shrines, monuments, temples, and aqueducts were seen on every hand.

Of aqueducts we must say more, not only because their remains are the most striking of the Campagna ruins to-day, but also because they had a share in the desolating of the great plain.

No city in the world was ever better supplied with fresh water than Ancient Rome. By means of viaducts and huge stone embankments, the rivers and springs

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of the Sabine Hills were conducted to Rome in such abundance that there was a supply of 230 gallons daily for each inhabitant. From the city the lines of these aqueducts can still be traced, spreading across the Campagna like the threads of a spider's web, and miles of the arches still stand. Upon these arches were carried tunnels of stone, through which the water flowed to a vast reservoir, whence the fountains, baths, and private houses of Rome were supplied. One aqueduct is in use to this day, but the rest were partially destroyed by the Goths in the sixth century.

The cutting of these vast aqueducts turned the water on to the plain and flooded the Campagna; hence arose the marshes and the malarial fever which is the pest of the region. Then the raids of the barbarians drove the farmer and the vine-grower from the land, and it became still more and more a swampy desert. For there flowed down into it from the hills a thousand little brooks and rills which had been of great service for irrigation; but when the land was neglected, the streams were no longer used to good purpose, and overran the soil.

The people of the Campagna to-day are farmers and herdsmen. They watch sheep, cows, goats, and buffaloes, as the latter feed over the hills and below the ledges, where the wild-fig shows its clusters of bloom. They till the vine and tend olives, and the vintage season is the most important time of their year. The vines are grown in close groups, and the clusters of grapes are gathered in wooden vessels which narrow towards the base. The grapes are flung into a press fixed above a

The Roman Campagna

great cask, and the juice is driven out by treading with the bare feet as in Bible times.

The second great harvest is that of the olive in November or December. The fruit is gathered and pressed for its oil. The finer oil is used for cooking purposes, the coarser goes to feed the lamp, and olive logs, when the trees come down, make a splendid winter fire.

When the wine and oil are ready, they are carried to Rome in small hooded carts. Beneath the hood of linen or leather sits the driver, while his little savage dog is perched on top of the casks, and is a watchful guard both over the goods and his master. At the back of the cart there is always a tiny barrel of wine fixed crosswise. This is for the refreshment of the driver, and becomes his property when the journey is ended.

As he jogs on, he passes fields where the peasants are at work. They sing as they toil, chanting some old folk-song for hour after hour as they bend at their task. Or, across some wild, lonely upland he sees one of the *butteri* trot along—one of the herdsmen—a picturesque fellow on his rough pony which he sits with the ease and grace of a born horseman. They are wonderful men in the saddle, these herdsmen of the Campagna, and when Buffalo Bill's cowboys challenged them to a trial of skill in rough-riding they bore away the palm.

Now the wine-cart rolls by a cross hung with flowers, and the driver bends his head, for at this spot one of his comrades was killed under the wheels of the

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cart. Such accidents are not uncommon. During the long, lonely journey under the hot sun a man becomes drowsy, falls asleep, rolls off his cart, and is crushed under the heavy wheels, while the animals plod steadily forward on the well-known way.

CHAPTER XIII

AT NAPLES

NAPLES, the largest city of South Italy, is also the most beautiful. It stands on a bay whose shores sweep round in a noble curve, and from the water's edge rise slopes covered with the white houses and the gardens of the city. From the water it looks magnificent, and the approach by sea is far grander than any approach by land.

"What words can analyse the details of this matchless panorama, and unravel that magic web of beauty into which palaces, villas, forests, gardens, vineyards, the mountains and the sea are woven! What pen can paint the soft curves, the gentle undulations, the flowing outlines, the craggy steps, and the far-seen heights, which, in their combination, are so full of grace! No skill can catch the changing hues of the distant mountains, the playing waves, the films of purple and green which spread themselves over the calm waters, the sunsets of gold and orange, and the aerial veils of rose and amethyst which drop upon the hills from skies of morning and evening. 'See Naples and die' is a well-

At Naples

known Italian saying, but it should read, 'See Naples and live.'"

The Neapolitans, in any case, believe in living, and living, too, in the merriest fashion. Never was a more noisy, lively race of beings than the people of Naples. They shout, laugh, sing, talk, gesticulate all day long, and far into the night. Their streets are a veritable Babel, with crowds of passengers, loungers, gossips, jokers, streams of carriages hurrying up and down, with drivers yelling and cracking their whips like madmen, while bells jingle on the harness.

The street is the true home of the Neapolitan. There he sits, works, eats, and his house is a mere shelter into which he creeps at night to sleep. He does not always do that, for in the heat of summer he loves to lie on the pavement, or in the courtyard, for the sake of the coolness. Many of them are very poor, but poverty seems softened in this land of warmth and beauty. The beggar eats his scrap of bread and an onion, and then is quite content to lie in the sun and watch the tide of life which flows without ceasing along the busy streets, or up and down the lovely shore. More, he will not work if work be offered him, and easy work, too. An artist remarks that he once called to a tattered, miserable wretch and offered him sixpence to carry his easel a few hundred yards. The beggar looked up from his bed of warm sand and declined, politely, but with the greatest firmness, and this was the true Neapolitan spirit.

The streets are not only noisy, but full of colour. The awnings are of brilliant stripes and shades; the

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women love the most vivid tints in their dresses ; the paint-pot spreads its liveliest colours on stalls and shop-fronts and carriages. The animals which draw the latter are decorated in the gayest fashion for sheer love of display. A mule-train, coming into the city along the white and dusty roads, is a very striking and picturesque sight. On the back of each animal rises a column of glittering brass, surmounted by a tuft of fur, and adorned with brass nails. Between the cars is fastened a mass of soft light fur and red tassels. Bells tinkle on the trappings, and the effect of the whole is most gay and pleasing.

The streets are full of stalls piled with masses of flowers—scarlet, white, and blue—or with vegetables almost as brilliant in colour, or with eatables. The last are very numerous, and almost every other stall is frying, or boiling, or baking. The street is the general kitchen for the great mass of the people, and there they love to stand and watch the cooking of the meal they are about to eat. One stall serves macaroni, the national food ; another sells that beloved delicacy, snail soup ; another roasts chestnuts, and offers them for sale in bouquets, each chestnut spiked upon a short stick, and the customers stand or sit around, and drink or munch calmly in face of all the world.

Here and there are places to which the people crowd eagerly to look at certain numbers posted up outside in flaring figures of red, green, and blue. Such a place is a *banco lotto*, a place where lottery tickets are sold, and the passion of the people for the lottery is one of the curses of Italy. The lottery is under the control

At Naples

of the Government, which makes great sums out of the money spent on tickets.

Every Neapolitan dreams that he will, one day or another, buy a ticket which will turn out a lucky number, and win a great prize, and thus the vice of gambling receives great encouragement. Even the very poorest will stake their farthings in a share of a lottery ticket, believing devoutly in a certain set of lucky numbers which they try again and again. There is a lottery dictionary in which every event has a certain number assigned to it, and many persons use this dictionary in staking their money. In this connexion a strange but true story is told:

“A money-lender in Naples was robbed in broad daylight. His safe happened to be unlocked for the moment, and all its contents were taken, and he himself so severely wounded by the robbers that he was left for dead. When he came to, and realized that he was ruined, in despair the wretched man turned to his dictionary of lottery numbers, and put the little money remaining to him on the three numbers corresponding to an attempt at murder, theft, and unlocked safe. He won, and recovered every penny lost by his misadventure.”

This gambling on the lottery leads to a great deal of petty theft on the part of servants and clerks, just as gambling on racehorses leads to theft in England. And the mention of theft brings us easily to the Camorra, which, fortunately, has no representative among us. The Camorra is a vast secret society, composed of thieves and of those who protect them and share in the

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spoil. We ought rather to say, that is supposed to be a secret society, for in reality its members are well-known to the police and to many of the public. But the police never attempt to break it up—they hold it in too great a dread. The head of the Camorra is known as the “Capo Camorristi,” and his power in Naples is very great. An English writer speaks of this power in connexion with stealing dogs, a practice to which the Neapolitan thieves—members all of the Camorra—are much attached.

“A friend of ours, possessor of a valuable dog, and aware of this peculiarity, determined to take the matter courageously into his own hands. Fortunately, he knew the ‘Capo,’ the president of this strange society, and went to him for assistance.

“‘I have,’ he said, ‘a beautiful dog to which I am devoted. When I walk about the streets of Naples I have to keep him always on the chain and literally never take my eyes off him. May I appeal to your kindness to assure me of the animal’s safety?’

“He was listened to kindly. A careful note was taken of the animal’s appearance and of its owner’s address.

“‘You need have no further anxiety,’ said this quaint official of the underground world of Naples. And our friend now walks light-heartedly through the crowded streets of the town, and the dog runs wherever he pleases in safety.”

The Great Volcano

CHAPTER XIV

THE GREAT VOLCANO

IN every view of Naples the eye is drawn to that most striking and interesting of mountains, Vesuvius. This beautiful cone-like form, springing straight from the sea, and clear from base to summit, is capped with its ever-ascending column of smoke, and the peasants eye the great volcano uneasily. Every one has in mind its recent eruption, and dreads lest at any moment its cloud should thicken and redden, its showers of ashes and stones leap forth, its streams of lava begin to run.

An eruption of Vesuvius is a sight which inspires with awe the beholder who has nothing at stake. It fills with terror the peasantry whose farms and vineyards lie along the lower slopes and surround the foot of the mountain. The earth shakes and trembles as the tremendous fires within the mountain struggle to break forth, and a pall of smoke bursts from the crater far above and overshadows the land. From this thick veil of dark vapour pours down a heavy shower of cinders and fine ashes. From the crater run down streams of lava, molten rock. These are the two great agencies of destruction. Wherever the lava runs it destroys everything in its path with its tongue of fire, and covers fields and vineyards beneath its slow-moving stream. When it cools it is a layer of solid rock above the ruined land, which is thus buried for ever. The

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ashes and dust are equally destructive at the moment, but their effects are not so lasting.

The flow of a stream of lava is very slow. Even on a steep slope it scarcely seems to move. Thus there is no fear of people being overwhelmed by it. The peasant has ample time to remove his belongings from his doomed house. Sometimes a house or a village which seemed certain to be destroyed has been saved by the lava stream turning aside, as it were in mere caprice, since there appeared to be no unevenness of the ground to shape its course.

Another thing to be observed about the stream of lava is that its surface is impenetrable. It appears to be perfectly liquid, a river of fire, as it flows along. But the heaviest stones may be dashed upon it without making any impression. They will bound over its surface as a cricket-ball bounds over ice.

A visit to the crater is of deep interest, for here one sees a marvellous exhibition of the forces of nature. As you mount the cone the ground becomes hotter and hotter, and you come upon the lip of the crater with a suddenness which is startling. You find yourself on the edge of a huge bowl about half a mile in diameter and about a hundred yards deep. Upon looking into this bowl you observe that its surface is composed of stones, cinders, and lumps of lava, and is broken here and there by great holes, through which boil all the fury of the volcano.

The sight is most awful in its grandeur. The whole vast bowl is one seething mass of fire. Out of it pours a dense cloud of smoke and vapour, so thickly laden

The Great Volcano

with sulphur that a whiff of it sets you coughing. And crash upon crash, roar upon roar, heralds the successive explosions which hurl white-hot stones of every size and shape high into the air. You cannot stand still. The ground is so hot that you must move from spot to spot, or your feet begin to get unpleasantly heated.

Here and there are cracks which show you that you are really walking about on fire. Within a few inches of your boots the earth is actually red-hot. If you thrust your walking-stick into one of these cracks and hold it there for a few moments, it is charred just as in a fire. The ground about you is of many colours. There is the dull black of lava which has dried and set, there is the deep red of that which is fresh from the furnace below, there is every shade of orange and yellow, due to the presence of sulphur.

But it is the tremendous abyss below which draws your eye and holds your attention. As the pall of steam and vapour wavers to and fro, you catch glimpses of fiery chasms, whence spout the terrible fires which rage below. "Throw together all the shipwrecks, bombardments, cataracts, earthquakes, thunderstorms, railway accidents, and all terrors of the sort you can think of, and you have some representation of the uproar of sound which the eruption of a volcano offers. Take them in conjunction with the marvels of sight, and the final effect is nothing short of appalling. Take them together when the daylight is over, and the lower world can no longer be distinguished; when the varied colouring of the ground has disappeared in the darkness, and you can see nothing but the gleam of the

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burning earth up between the minerals at your feet, the white-hot glare of the ribbon of molten lava which is gliding languidly down the mountain at your side, and in front of you the flashing of the internal fire upon the cloud of vapour overhanging the abyss, and you have a scene which is rather different from what you picture as you read that Vesuvius is once again in a state of eruption."

CHAPTER XV

THE BURIED CITIES

THE most terrible eruption of Vesuvius, which is on record, happened more than 1,800 years ago. In A.D. 79 two beautiful cities stood at the foot of the volcanic mountain. They were Herculaneum and Pompeii. Pompeii was then an old city, but was at the height of its glory, with temples, baths, and splendid villas, where wealthy Romans took their luxurious ease. On an August day, when the people were going about their work or their pleasure, suddenly there burst forth from the crater far above their heads a vast column of black smoke. It rose to an immense height in the blue sky and slowly spread abroad. As it spread it shut out the light of the sun until, at midday, the city was covered with a fearful darkness, lighted only by the flames which darted from the awful overhanging cloud.

Many fled from the place, but many stayed in their

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THE ARCH OF CONSTANTINE, ROME. Page 51.

The Buried Cities

houses, expecting that the cloud of vapour would pass away. But soon a rain of ashes began to fall. First, it was but a light dust, then it grew thicker and heavier and was mingled with pumice-stones, and the streets were filled with choking sulphurous vapour. Heavier and heavier grew this dreadful rain until the streets were impassable, and those who tried to escape stumbled and fell in the clogging masses of cinders and stones, or were struck down by the heavier fragments hurled upon them.

Now, none was left alive save those who had shut themselves up closely in their houses. But the doom of even these was close at hand. With a roar like a thousand rivers in flood, streams of hot, black mud rushed down the mountain-side and overwhelmed the place. These streams filled streets, houses, cellars, underground passages, everywhere, and completed the destruction. In three days there was no sign that Pompeii had existed. It lay deep buried beneath a vast bed of ashes, stones, and mud.

So complete was the destruction that the very site passed from the memory of man. Time went on, and the rich volcanic soil threw up trees and flowers, and men built their houses and tilled their vineyards above the forgotten city. Then, about the middle of the eighteenth century, the work of excavation was begun, and Pompeii was brought to the light of day once more. But years passed before the diggers knew that it was Pompeii they were laying bare. At last an inscription was found, which settled the matter beyond doubt.

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The excavation of Pompeii has laid bare a Roman city of nearly 2,000 years ago for modern inspection. It has been said that if the eruption had been planned purposely to preserve the city, it could not have done its work more perfectly. Herculaneum was overwhelmed with lava, and the excavation of lava amounts to hewing away solid rock ; but Pompeii was covered with dust and liquid mud, which formed a mould, encasing and preserving objects and human forms, and giving them up as perfect as when they were first entombed.

Nor are the pictures and inscriptions on the walls greatly injured. The frescoes, the wall-paintings are to be seen, and many of the inscriptions are of great interest. None of these can touch the visitor so much as the simple, careless records made for the work of the day and intended only for the writer's eye. On the wall of a shop the owner has noted how many flasks of wine he has sold ; on the wall of a kitchen the cook has set down how much food has been prepared, and another note is made of how many tunics went to the wash, how much wool has been given out to the slaves to be spun, and other domestic details ; on the wall of a house a schoolboy has scratched his Greek alphabet, and another has written a scrap of a lesson, and near at hand is an announcement of a sale by auction.

At the time of the eruption the municipal elections were going forward in Pompeii, and many of the inscriptions remind us of our methods of to-day. We cover the walls and hoardings with "Vote for Jones !" and the Pompeiian put forth his appeal in precisely the same fashion, save that he inscribed his words instead of

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printing them. One notice called upon the electors to vote for Cneius Helvetius, as worthy to be a magistrate. Pansa was another candidate, and his friends declared him to be most worthy. The supporters of Popidius begged for votes for him on the ground that he was *a modest and illustrious youth*. Poor Pompeii and poor candidates! Before the day of election came the candidates were dead or fled, and Pompeii was a lost city.

The streets of Pompeii were narrow, and most of the houses were small, but the theatres, public baths, fountains, statues, and triumphal arches were numerous and splendid. The floors of the dwellings were of mosaics; the walls were richly decorated with frescoes; and the gardens, though of no great extent, were beautifully laid out.

The excavations have yielded a vast number of most perfect examples of the tools, utensils, and ornaments of the everyday life of Pompeii. In the museum we can see the pots and pans of the kitchen, the table services of silver; the lady's dressing-table, with her ivory combs, her chains and bracelets of gold, and her thimbles of bronze; the writer's inkstand, with his pen beside it, and the tablets upon which he inscribed his notes; the toys of the children; and a host of other things.

There are also striking casts of the bodies which were found in the streets and cellars. One woman had fallen, clutching a bag of gold as she fled, and another shows two women (believed to be mother and daughter) who died side by side. In another case a mother and three children were found hand in hand.

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They were hurrying towards the city gate, but death was too swift for them. At the chief gate of the city was found a splendid example of the old Roman discipline. The sentinel stood there in his sentry-box, as he had stood through that awful day of thunderous gloom. Disdaining death, he had kept to his post and died in harness. He was found, his sword in one hand, while with the other he had covered his mouth with his tunic to keep out the poisonous fumes. Brave as the sentinel was a little dove, who had made her nest in a niche in the wall of a house. She also remained at her post, and beneath her skeleton was found the egg which she would not leave.

The excavations are still going on. At one end of the city is a hill of small stones, cinders, and fine white ashes, all easily to be moved by the spade. Beneath this hill is concealed the rest of Pompeii. A hundred labourers are at work, and an expert watches them carefully. Each find is examined, and, if valuable, is carried at once to the museum. It is expected that within fifty years the whole city will be laid bare.

CHAPTER XVI

IN SICILY

SICILY is an island of great charm and of wonderful beauty. It charms because here may be seen a people living in many respects just as they lived ages ago. Here we catch "glimpses of boats like antique galleys

In Sicily

with lateen sails ; of great religious processions winding through the streets, with pikemen and torches and noblemen's retainers in the liveries of the Middle Ages ; of hermits ; of goatherds in skins playing on the pipes of Theocritus ; of villagers wearing the Albanian dress worn by their ancestors when they fled from the Turk after the fall of Constantinople 400 years ago ; of countrymen tilling the land with methods described by Virgil."

Its beauty is very striking. It is a land of noble, rocky hills crowned by villages and castles, whose dwellers look down into romantic and lovely valleys where vineyards and groves of orange and of palm are mingled with cornfields and meadows. In winter, when our land is wrapped in snow or drenched with rain, the sun is shining in Sicily, and the roses and the violets bloom, and the air is perfumed with the scent of almond-blossom and of lavender.

And yet, amid these scenes of beauty, these smiling landscapes and lovely prospects of hill and vale and blue, shining sea, there live some of the most wretched peasantry that Italy or Europe can show. Their misery is caused by the abject poverty in which they exist, and this poverty largely springs from the Sicilian land system. In many parts of the island vast estates are held by nobles or wealthy men. These landlords very rarely live on their land. They are absentees, and spend their time at Rome, Naples, or Florence, or at some large Sicilian town. The landlord lets his estate to a *gabelotto*, or middleman, and the *gabelotto* sublets the land to the peasantry or employs them to work it.

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The *gabelotto* has only one aim—to make money for himself. So he squeezes the peasant as hard as he can, either letting land to him on the severest terms, or paying him little or nothing for his labour. Villari says :

“The peasantry live in villages for safety, and go out to their work, which is often miles away, every morning. In the villages there are a few good houses belonging to the *gabelotti* of the neighbourhood, while the rest of the population, the wretched peasants, live in the filthiest and most miserable hovels. The *gabelotti* ride about the country armed and well mounted, accompanied by escorts of armed and mounted retainers, so that they are able to tyrannize over the rest of the population. The system of middlemen is indeed one of the worst plagues of the island. The misery and poverty of the Sicilian labourers are almost inconceivable. They are starved, ill-clad, silent men, hating their masters with a sullen hatred which, on occasion, breaks forth into the most savage outburst of cruelty.”

It is from this class of wild and desperate men that the Sicilian brigand springs. A man murders a landlord, or *gabelotto*, whom he hates ; then he flies to the hills to escape from the law and becomes a brigand, a highway robber whose hand is against every man. Among the mountain wilds he meets with other fugitives from the law, and they form a band which becomes a terror to the district and a menace to all peaceful travellers. Not only do they rob those who fall into their hands, but they attack houses and carry off people, and hide their captives in some wild and

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distant spot ; then they demand a great sum of money from the friends of the prisoners before the latter can be set free. Here is an account from a London newspaper of a recent piece of brigandage :

“ Once again the companion of man has proved his faithfulness and cleverness, saving, if not his master’s life, a large part of his fortune. The other day, four men in the country near Girgenti, Sicily, gained entrance to a house by representing themselves as having been shooting all day, and consequently being very thirsty. Once inside, they produced their revolvers, and confronting the sole occupants, who happened to be two young brothers, they tied one to a chair and took the other prisoner, leaving a letter on the table demanding 40,000 francs (about £1,600) for the return of the boy. They took him to a cave in the hills, and, guarding the entrance, soon made as merry as circumstances permitted.

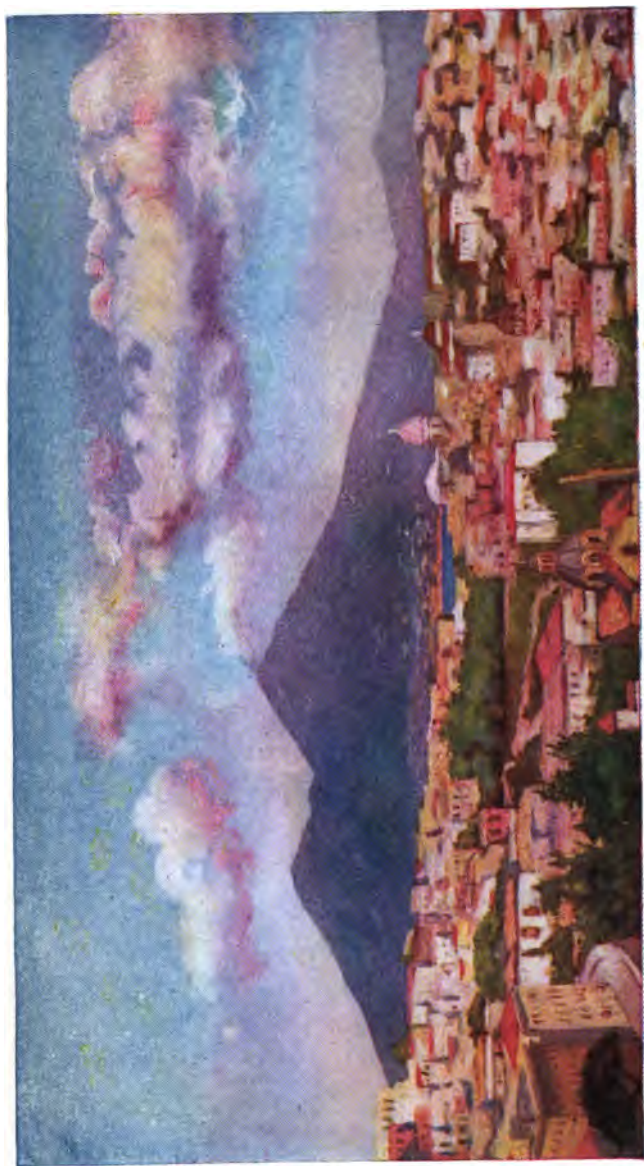
“ Meanwhile the boy became aware that his pet dog, who had been allowed to accompany him, was busy digging a hole, as he thought ; but soon daylight was to be seen, and he understood that that was a way out. The faithful little animal worked on for some hours, by which time there was a hole big enough for his master to push through. The brigands were blissfully ignorant, and only woke to the true position of affairs when they were confronted by the carabinieri and their late victims, and even yet in prison they are wondering how that boy got out.”

The carabinieri are a picked body of armed police whose duty is to guard travellers upon dangerous roads.

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The carriage of the tourist is perhaps rolling quietly along when suddenly, as if springing from nowhere, two splendid mounted figures close in behind and trot after the vehicle. They are a pair of fine stalwart fellows clad in a uniform of blue and red, with white belts and glittering rifles in their hands, and riding good horses. They follow for some distance, then salute, wheel their horses, and walk gently back : they have reached the limit of their patrol. The traveller now looks uneasily at the wild, lonely slopes above and around him, and it is with a sensation of relief that he sees the next pair slip round a rock or out of a ravine and trot steadily after him.

Even more wretched than the lot of the peasants who work in the fields is that of many of those who work in the sulphur-mines. The labour of mining the sulphur is hard and poorly paid, but the miner is fortunate in comparison with the carrier who bears the blocks of sulphur from the mine to the open air. These carriers are boys, often mere children of seven, eight, or nine years of age, and from two to four work for each miner. As a class the miners are hard taskmasters, and treat their slaves with great brutality. The word "slaves" is almost literally correct, for the miners purchase these children from their parents. When a miner takes a carrier into his employment he pays the parent a sum varying from fifty shillings to ten or a dozen pounds. This binds the boy to his service until the money is paid back. The money is never paid back, so the transaction is to all intents and purposes a purchase pure and simple.



NAPLES AND MOUNT VESUVIUS. *Chapter XIII.*

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This child-labour is most inhuman, and the tasks put upon these boys, and the vile usage they receive at the hands of the brutal miners, have caused many Italian writers to denounce the system in the strongest terms. One of the latter writes :

“ They have to descend the tortuous passages where the air is fearfully hot and reeks with poisonous sulphur fumes ; they are given loads weighing on an average 70 pounds or more, which they have to carry for distances ranging between 100 and 200 yards. As it is very hot in the mines, they work stark naked ; but they must also carry their loads for some distance in the open air, where in winter the thermometer falls below freezing-point. These boys work from seven to eight hours in the mines, or from ten to twelve in the open air, always carrying burdens far above their strength. They walk slow-footed, bent double by the crushing load, moaning, crying, or invoking the help of the Virgin and the saints.”

CHAPTER XVII

IN SICILY (*continued*)

MANY a Sicilian is born in a tomb, spends his life in a tomb, and finally dies in it, though he does not then remain there, for it is wanted once more for the living. Why does he dwell in a sepulchre ? His reason is good : he is too poor to live anywhere else.

The people of former ages, and, above all, the

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Greeks who once lived in the island, never built a tomb. They hewed their last resting-places out of the solid rock, and to this day the tombs are there just as they were shaped long ago. The poor Sicilian of to-day takes a tomb, puts his simple belongings into it, and stays there in great content. If he can hit upon a tomb of the time of the Roman Empire, he will make himself very comfortable ; for those old Romans, who dug, and built, and shaped things to last for ever, were in the habit of hewing out a most capacious tomb, and sometimes a series of tombs opening from one to the other. In each burial chamber is a broad stone shelf on which a burial urn once stood. The modern Sicilian spreads his bed upon it, and seats himself on the stone benches cut around the walls.

These tomb dwellings are usually found on the outskirts of towns, and are often inhabited by farm-labourers. That is one of the odd things of Sicily : the farm-labourer is often a townsman, not a countryman. So unsafe is the open country in some parts of the land that it is deserted by night. The labourer walks or jogs on a donkey away to his home in the town miles off, and comes back to work in the morning.

When he is at home he spends but little time in his house. For the poor Sicilian, as for every other South Italian of his standing, the street is his sitting-room. Here he spends his spare time, chatting with his friends and watching the passers-by. There is plenty to see, for the streets of a Sicilian town are never quiet for a moment. Here comes a flock of goats. It

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pauses, and one of them is detached from the herd and driven into a door near at hand, where it nimbly climbs the stairs to a room where a customer lives. Here it is milked, for no customer will trust milk which is not fresh drawn before her eyes. The goat skips back to the street, and the herd moves on.

Men with fish and vegetables for sale come along bawling their wares, and are arrested by shrill cries from far aloft. It is a customer on the top story of a tall house. She lets a basket down by a cord, and screams her wishes. The seller takes her money from the basket, puts in her purchase, and she hauls up the basket. The water-seller comes along crying his ware. In this hot and thirsty land he does a great trade in selling draughts of water, flavoured with some kind of essence, at a halfpenny each. After him marches the dealer in dried beans and nuts, and the man who has a stove and a store of queer food in his basket. This wandering cook is in great demand. He is constantly called upon to open his basket and set his stove going while his patrons watch him at work, and devour course after course as he sets it before them. Each course has a fixed price: it is one halfpenny; and a dinner of six courses runs to the sum of threepence, and makes an ample meal for the moderate Sicilian.

A specimen dinner might consist first of a halfpenny-worth of sea-urchins and a halfpennyworth of chestnut soup, then a plate of fish (not very fresh, perhaps, but that is nothing to a Sicilian palate), then artichokes boiled in oil, followed by fried maize and a slice of meat (the manner in which the animal came by its

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death is a trifle uncertain, but that is not worthy of attention), and ending with dessert—a handful of cherries and strawberries, or an orange and some dates. A wealthy customer has a halfpennyworth of wine to wash it all down, but the more frugal are content with water.

The carts that roll along the street form a sight in themselves, for the Sicilian cart is less a cart than a picture-gallery. The panels are filled with pictures painted in the gayest and brightest of colours, and the subjects vary from Bible pictures to a portrait of the latest brigand who has made himself famous. A devout carter passes whose vehicle is adorned with figures of saints and pictures of martyrdoms. The next is a worldly fellow who has decked his panels with ballet-girls and comic subjects, and next comes a cart painted with historical scenes, showing Roger, Count of Sicily, cutting down hordes of Saracens ; or William Tell shooting at the apple ; or Columbus setting out on his famous voyage. A driver with a poetical turn decorates his cart with scenes from the great Italian poets.

The cart itself is simply a large square box on two high wheels. There are no seats in it, and it is used for every kind of work. If it has to carry people, benches or chairs are placed in it, and a most astonishing crowd manage to pack themselves away in the affair. Fourteen or fifteen people form a common load for a Sicilian cart, and one ass slowly jogs along with this remarkable freight.

When the benches are out of the cart the latter is

In Sicily

ready to receive a huge load of sulphur, or furniture, or dung, or anything and everything its owner has to carry. The load is always huge, and the hardy ass manages to haul it along, however big it may be. When the day's work is over, the faithful donkey goes home with his master, and very often not to a stable, but to a corner of the family sitting-room. The poor Sicilian thinks that what is good enough for him is also good enough for his ass or mule, and a single apartment is often shared by the family and their possessions of a donkey, a pig, a dog, and a crate of fowls.

The fowls always live in a crate so that they may not stray away, and be lost or stolen. In the morning the crate is lifted out into the sunshine. At evening it is lifted back into the house, and that is all the change the fowls ever know. The dog is, of course, a close friend of the family, and goes with them everywhere, even to church. It is a very common sight in a Sicilian church to see the dogs stretched beside their owners at service, and they behave themselves in the most correct fashion. This cannot always be said of the children, for the latter often make a playground of the church, and romp about while service is going on. One writer speaks of seeing a little boy trundling an iron hoop over the stone flags of a church floor while a solemn service was being held, and of other boys sailing paper boats in the holy-water vessel in a cathedral, and no one interfered with them.

Nor is the dog always the meek and mild creature he appears. By day nothing could be more harmless

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than the Sicilian dog. Half a dozen children pull him to and fro by his ears and hair, and he does not protest. The stranger passes by, and he does not give a single yelp. But at night he is a very different fellow. He rouses himself and goes on guard. He bares his teeth, and his hair bristles. He is a wolf-dog, true brother of the savage wolves which still haunt the great mountain of Etna, and make raids upon the flocks. He is ready to tear to pieces any stranger that comes near the fold or home which he watches.

CHAPTER XVIII

HOME LIFE IN ITALY

IN England home life is a matter of the first importance. The Englishman's house is his castle in a very literal sense, and in our cold climate he needs its protection and comforts so much that he naturally thinks a very great deal of it. In Italy things are quite different. The Italian sleeps in his house, and sometimes eats there, but he passes so much time outside—in the streets, in the café, at the theatre—that he troubles little about "the comforts of home."

The upper classes live in vast palaces, very stately and grand perhaps, but far too big to be made comfortable, particularly in winter. Then one shivers in a great bare carpetless apartment, with a chilly marble floor, dotted with a few rugs, and at one side a small

Home Life in Italy

fireplace with a smaller fire, most of the heat going up the cavernous chimney. If you find the warmth insufficient you are supplied with a *scaldino*, a small vessel of metal or earthenware, in which is a handful of hot cinders, and at this you may warm your hands. But in summer the same rooms are cool and delightful.

The size of the rooms in these old Italian palaces is wonderful. "In one palace in Florence the drawing-room is so enormous that one corner is used as a billiard-room, with a full-sized table; another part is devoted to music, and is occupied by a concert grand; another part is the hostess's boudoir; and all the rest serves as an ordinary reception-room. When a dance is given the carpet is partly rolled up, some of the furniture is pushed aside, and there is a ballroom ready for use. Roman houses are even larger."

Rich and poor often live close together in a very odd fashion in Italy. It is not merely that the palace and the hovel stand side by side; they very often do that, and, more, they are very often under one roof.

A great house is divided into flats, each occupying one story. The finer parts of the building are often inhabited by people of great wealth, while the garrets above and the cellars below swarm with wretched creatures, who often have not enough to eat. "The latter see splendid equipages drive up to their own doors, as it were, every day, and costly viands brought upstairs for great banquets. At night they see ladies glittering with jewels enter the house, and hear the strains of dance music, while they themselves are starving above and below. It is Mayfair and White-

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chapel in the same building. Nowhere is there a rich quarter inhabited by the rich alone, nor a poor quarter containing no good houses. The slums invade all parts of the town, and sometimes are found near the gates of the Royal Palace itself."

"In the country it is the same: the nobleman's villa is surrounded by the houses of his *contadini*. In Tuscany, where the labourers and farmers are better off, the contrast is not so striking or painful; but in the South one often comes across a fine castle, furnished with comfort, and even luxury, the sideboard bright with silver-plate, the walls covered with silk and tapestry and good pictures, placed in the midst of a filthy village of the most miserable hovels, in which men, women, and children live and starve together with pigs and cattle. All this contributes to embitter the feelings of the poor towards their masters, which often degenerates into unforgiving hatred, and the landlords have only their armed retainers, who are little better than bravos, to depend on for their personal safety."

People of the middle classes live either in small houses or in a flat of some great house let off in blocks of apartments. One room, the drawing-room, is very gaudy, the rest are carelessly furnished, and, to English eyes, rather untidy. This is often caused by the lack of domestic help, for servants are few, because there is no money to pay for them. The salaries of professional men are much smaller in Italy than in England. A man who makes from £200 to £300 a year is looked upon as very well off. A country doctor makes less than £100 per annum. A town doctor in good practice

Home Life in Italy

will run up to £300. A fairly successful barrister makes about the same. But in both professions there are vast numbers who live from hand to mouth, and earn very little in a twelvemonth. Government officials are also poorly paid, but there is great competition for an official post, as the work is light and the money sure. To put the matter in a nutshell, the average incomes of the two countries may be contrasted: the average income of an Englishman is £31; the average income of an Italian is £7 16s. 8d.—about one-fourth.

The Italian of the middle class never eats more than two real meals a day. When he awakes he drinks a cup of coffee and milk, perhaps with a piece of bread-and-butter, perhaps not. His first meal comes between ten and twelve, and is a substantial luncheon, when he eats eggs and macaroni, a dish of meat served with vegetables, and ends with cheese and fruit. With this meal he drinks wine, which is, of course, the national drink, and accompanies every meal among rich and poor. After lunch he takes a rest before resuming his occupation, and in summer this rest becomes the siesta, when every one dozes through the heat of the day.

He does not take tea, which, as a rule, he looks upon as a medicine, and his next meal is dinner, eaten about six o'clock. The order of the dinner is much the same as in England, but there is one great difference in the fact that almost every eatable is cooked in oil. This is not so bad if the oil be excellent, sound olive-oil, but at times it is rancid, and then the result is far from tasty to an English palate. Again, the favourite condiment is garlic, and to a stranger a little of this

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grinds them into meal, and mixes them with rye or maize to make bread.

The Italian peasant is seen at his best in Tuscany, where the land system favours him in the disposal of his labour. "If one goes to a Tuscan town on market-day, when the farmers of the neighbourhood come in to sell their produce, in the crowds of peasants with their dark-brown, handsome faces, their intelligent expressions, their fairly prosperous appearance, and their stalwart frames, one sees the Italian rural classes at their best."

On a large estate in Tuscany the owner and the peasant farmer are partners. The estate is divided into a number of farms, and the latter, as a rule, run to some thirty acres each. The peasant works the farm, and the produce is divided between the landlord and himself. The oxen on the farm are owned jointly, and in all respects the interests of landlord and tenant are in common. The system works well, for the tenant regards himself as part proprietor, and does his very best both for himself and his master. The latter pays all taxes, and, in case of a bad harvest, advances enough grain to the former to keep him until the next harvest, when the corn is repaid.

In Northern Italy the farms are let upon rent much the same as in England, though in some parts there are numbers of peasant proprietors, who cultivate their own land and are fairly well off.

In Southern Italy and in Sicily the peasants are seen at their worst. The farms are mostly worked by hired labour, or let to small farmers. There are a great number of labourers, and their condition is most

The Italian Peasant

wretched. Their wages are very low, their work is very hard, and their homes are miserable hovels. Owing to their unhealthy dwellings, and the poor, unwholesome food they eat, they often suffer from a dreadful disease known as the pellagra. A victim of the pellagra is attacked by it at first in the summer, and is free from it in the winter ; but the intervals of freedom shorten as the malady gains power, until the unhappy victim wastes away to a state of extreme feebleness, and his skin is affected in such a fashion that he looks more like a horrible withered mummy than a man. It is fortunate when his sufferings are ended by death. This disease is also common in the vast rice swamps which are found in the east of the Lombard Plain, and near Venice.

In consequence of their great poverty, large numbers of the peasantry leave their homes to seek employment in other lands. They are welcomed everywhere by employers. They are obedient and hard-working. Wherever any great bridge-building or railway-laying is going forward, there are found swarms of Italian labourers. They are very careful and frugal. They live very simply, and out of the smallest wage always save something to send home. "The men are ready to starve to put something aside for the women and children," says Villari. But, on the other hand, they are not welcomed by the labouring classes of the country to which they go. The Italian will live so cheaply that he is willing to take small wages, and so wages are reduced all round. Then, as a rule, he is very ignorant, and his fondness for using a knife

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makes him both feared and hated. Italy is the country of the knife. It is drawn upon slight provocation, and often severe wounds or death results from a small quarrel.

The Italian peasant is very superstitious. He believes in a vast number of mysterious things—in ghosts, witches, spells, werewolves, and, above all, in the evil eye. The peasant is not alone in the latter belief. Throughout Italy are to be found vast numbers of all classes who believe firmly in the evil eye. They hold that certain persons can do evil to, or bring evil upon, others by merely looking at them. They say that the person having this unpleasant power may sometimes exert it without willing to do so. The only thing to make yourself safe is to get out of his way, but if that be impossible, to make the sign which will protect you from the threatened harm.

The sign is to form the figure of a pair of horns pointing downwards. This is done by thrusting out the first and little fingers, and closing the rest into the hand. In some parts of Italy this gesture is universal. It is not only used when meeting a jettatore, or caster of the evil eye, but is made at once if jostled in the street by a passer-by, or upon catching the eye of any stranger. Charms and amulets of the same shape are worn by children or fastened upon animals to throw off this fascination of the evil eye.

Many other superstitions are connected with diseases. If you stammer, keep a pebble in your mouth, and you will be cured; if you have a bad cold, sniff up some coal-dust; and if you have a sore throat, then tie a stock-

The Italian Peasant

ing—and take care that it is a dirty stocking—round your throat. It is believed that you may cure almost any disease by collecting the oil which drips from the framework on which church bells are hung, and rubbing it on the affected place, and another favourite remedy is to boil a skein of twine and jump three times upon it.



GREECE



SKETCH-MAP OF GREECE.

GREECE

CHAPTER I

AN ENCHANTED LAND

AWAY down in a Southern sunny corner on the other side of Europe there rises from the blue waters of the Mediterranean the land which we call Greece.

You already know this country as a wonderland that used to be the home of a noble race of heroes. The Heroic Age lasted for about two hundred years, and this is the once-upon-a-time epoch to which you owe some of your favourite stories. Then it was that Perseus slew the gorgon, Hercules performed his twelve famous labours, Theseus killed the Minotaur, Jason led the Argonauts in the Golden Fleece adventure, and Ulysses took Troy by the wooden horse stratagem.

The Trojan War marks the end of the Heroic Age. And now we come to a time, about three thousand years ago, when men began to rule over Greece. Four great tribes—Achæans, Dorians, Ionians, and Æolians—entered into a struggle for supremacy, and so rampant was the spirit of rivalry for possession of the land that the principal competitors not only fought against each other, but were divided against themselves. In spite of this political strife, all the tribes were gradually drawn

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together, so that they became one people, while at the same time they formed many independent States. Even under the disruptive conditions of clashing ambitions and inter-State jealousies this union of the tribes into a nation is not surprising, for, as they all traced their descent to one father, Hellen, they naturally looked on one another as brothers. Moreover, they spoke the same language and worshipped the same gods. Hence there were three very strong ties to knit them together.

The time came when all these people began to call themselves by a national name—Hellenes; and to emphasize their homogeneity still further, they spoke of all other nations collectively as “barbarians.” Their native land was also given a name which proclaimed their pride of race—Hellas—and they were soon using this name to signify any and every district inhabited by Hellenes. As the Hellenes were daring adventurers and enterprising colonists, Hellas grew to embrace numerous islands off the homeland coast and in neighbouring waters, great cities in Asia Minor and on the shores of the Black Sea, extensive districts in Italy and Sicily, part of the north coast of Africa, together with a trading-centre in Egypt, and settlements as far west even as France and Spain.

The most formidable foreign enemies to challenge the power of Hellas were the Persians, and in the course of checking their invasions the Hellenes won two of the most famous battles in the world’s history—the Battle of Marathon (490 B.C.), and the naval Battle of Salamis (480 B.C.). About a century and a half later Alexander the Great, as supreme General of Hellas, completely turned the tables by challenging the Persian Power. *En route* to the enemy’s camp he brought Egypt to his

An Enchanted Land

feet, and founded the famous city of Alexandria, which was named after him ; then, having subdued the Persians, he extended his conquests to Northern India. But on his death in 323 B.C. Alexander's great Empire was split up. Meanwhile a new authority was asserting itself in the West. Rome was fast growing strong enough to dispute with Hellas for the position of supreme European Power. After considerably undermining the colonial strength of Hellas, the Romans succeeded in making the mother-country a Roman province in 146 B.C., and they altered her name to Greece.

As the heart of Hellas, we again find Greece an enchanted land. Its gods, who dwelt on Mount Olympus, must have laid it under the spell of genius, for there is no other reason to explain why so many great men should have been born in one country at one particular period. Many were the warriors, statesmen, philosophers, poets, dramatists, sculptors, and builders who were destined to win fame not only in their own day, in their own land, but for all time in every civilized land. By the force of intellect and the power to create beautiful things the Hellenes developed a remarkably highly cultured civilization, which they spread throughout the length and breadth of their domains. And although their political supremacy was overthrown by the Romans, artistically and intellectually their power endured in the influence they exerted on their conquerors, and through them on European civilization in general. Moreover, through the mediums of their marvellous literature, beautiful buildings, and unrivalled sculpture, that power still exists as an important factor in modern culture.

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western coast, in the waters known as the Ionian Sea, the islands were scattered, so that they were some little distance apart; but in the Ægean Sea, on the eastern side, they formed a continuous group, or archipelago. And to lend still greater variety to the pattern of Greece, circles of mountains were thrown up in the open waters, so that in many places the sea looked like a succession of mountain-girdled lakes.

Since the days when Greece was first fashioned, earthquakes have wrought havoc among the plains; have altered, and are constantly altering, the shape of mountains and the size of islands; have added a detail here, and completely wiped out another there. Man, too, has cut down many of the old woods and destroyed some of the ancient forests. But, generally speaking, Greece in shape and form is now as it ever was—a magnificent piece of natural patchwork. You have only to see the country to be quite sure that giants still stalk the inaccessible heights and rove in the shadowland of the mighty abysses, while fairies play on the sunny slopes and weave spells in the woodland dells.

Besides the charm of design, Greece has the fascination of colour. The principal note in the colour-scheme is blue. On a fine day—and fine days are a rule, with few exceptions—the sky is royal blue, the sea is sapphire blue, and the land has some tinge of blue in nearly all its lights and shades. The mountain-tops flash silver; on their bare, rugged sides bright silver-grey patches shine among blue-grey, grey-blue, and indigo shadows. The luxuriant little plains below have a carpet of a variegated green groundwork, toned to a soft hue by the bluish-green tint of numerous olive-groves, and the

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BATTLEFIELD OF MARATHON. Page 2.

How Dame Nature Fashioned Greece

chief colour of the decorative pattern of crops is the rich purple of the vineyards when the harvest is ripe.

Greece has yet another means of working her spell of enchantment. The air is so remarkably clear that you can see for miles around, and in the wonderful views you get from the plains up and around the mountains, and from the hill-tops down to the plains below, even far-distant details are plainly visible. That summit away on your horizon is not capped with a hazy mass that might be trees or possibly houses ; it is encircled by walls and crowned with temples. Obviously you are looking far across at an acropolis, the citadel of an old Greek town. But as the quality of the air enables you to see so much at one time, there is all the more reason why you should be prepared for a moment when you will suddenly be plunged into a darkness in which you cannot see an inch before your nose. There is no twilight in this country, and even the highways without the towns have no lamps ; so if you happen to be wending your way from village to village after sunset you will have to put one foot before the other very warily. Until the night-lights are lit in the sky, you will not be able to see whether the next step is going to help you forward on your stony path or carry you over a precipice. Presently I will tell you about an adventure I had on a night when there was no moon, and when not even a star came out to guide me up the steep ascent to my journey's end.

Among all the blessings with which Nature has endowed Greece, her wealth of sunshine is a very precious gift. On the lower slopes of the mountains and on the plains the summer is very long and very hot. In many

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parts hardly any rain falls between March and September—sometimes not even a drop. Most of the streams dry up and the grass withers; even the sun-loving crops run the risk of being spoiled, for although they are not greedy for moisture, there are times when they want a little more than the very few drops they get. On the other hand, when winter sets in, Jack Frost hardly ever does any damage. Snow occasionally falls, but the short season between one summer and the next is usually mild, and warm rain comes to water the land.

Up in the mountains there is rain even in the summer, but most of the peasants are away down in the sunshine then, working in the vineyards; and even though they must be prepared for snow when they go back to their homes, they will not have long to look forward to before sunshine-time comes again. And no one lives on the very high mountains, where it is bitingly cold, and where the snow sometimes lies till the middle of June.

CHAPTER III

THE MODERN GREEKS

THE Greeks of to-day are naturally very proud of being able to trace their descent to the Hellenes. True, there are some of them who number barbarians amongst their ancestors, for during the Middle Ages a great many Slavs settled in the country; but in spite of the Slavonic influence with which they were brought into contact, the mediæval Greeks managed to retain their national char-

The Modern Greeks

acteristics, and hand them down as an inheritance to their children.

A small proportion of the present population certainly consists of Albanians ; but the Albanians were the staunch allies of the Greeks in the War of Independence, and they won for themselves the right to be recognized as a vital part of the new Greece to which that war gave birth.

There are also a few Roumanians living in Northern Greece. The Greeks say that the bold, bad brigands, whose daring outrages brought the entire country into disgrace not so very long ago, were nearly all members of this nomad tribe. The last time the brigands of Greece made heyday was in 1870, when they captured and shot an Italian and three Englishmen.

Now you will understand why, in thinking of Modern Greece as a nation, you must not forget the Albanians and Roumanians ; but, above all, you must remember that the population consists mainly of people who have an hereditary right to the honoured family name of Greek.

You will, I am sure, be interested to hear all about the daily life of the Greeks, for it is so very different from anything you are used to at home.

First let me tell you what kind of clothes these people wear. They have adopted the Albanian costume as the Greek national dress, and in consequence this is the quaint and picturesque figure of a man that you are constantly meeting : From his waist hangs a very full white kilt, below which are short breeches. His legs are gay with high red gaiters, and his feet are encased in bright red shoes, which curl up at the toes, each into

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a point ornamented with a big black woollen pompon. His white shirt has a soft tucked front and full sleeves ; it looks very much like an elaborate nightshirt. Round his waist he wears a leathern girdle. In front of this belt bulges a pouch, which discovers the protruding hilt of a sheath-knife, the while it shelters, maybe, a hunk of bread for the murderous-looking weapon to dissect, and, still more likely, a handkerchief and some grimy slips of paper which pass for money in the land. Over his shirt he wears a richly embroidered bolero, and he may be carrying on one arm and shoulder his equally richly embroidered, open-sleeved, blue or red coat. A red fez, with a long blue tassel pressed down on one side, hugs his head and completes his outdoor attire. Picture the man old or young, as you like, but let him have good features, a sun-burnt face, and a well-proportioned figure ; above all, stamp him with dignity from the crown of his fez to the curled-up toes of his shoes, and your picture is complete.

You will frequently notice variations of this costume. For instance, a straw hat is sometimes worn instead of a fez, or a coloured handkerchief is knotted about the head ; and while one man favours gaiters, another prefers stockings gartered below the knee with a coloured band, which has festoons of cords and tasselled ends. But these little differences of detail are too slight to rob the whole dress of its national character. This costume is worn by many of the peasants and by several battalions of soldiers.

Here, again, is a man dressed in another kind of costume, which you will often see. There is nothing remarkable about his cotton trousers. Their roomy cut

The Modern Greeks

and well-worn appearance merely proclaim that their owner is a workman. But look at his coat. Have you ever before seen a labourer wearing anything quite so funny and pretty? The material is ordinary small-checked print, which has been soap-sudded and sun-tinted from navy and white to old-china and milky blue. The design of this everyday garment is artistic, and many are the stitches that have gone to its making. It fits down to the waist, where it is confined within a narrow band. Below hangs a full frill like a short skirt. Both back and front of the upper part are put into a yoke. The front has a succession of little tucks, neck-to-waistband long, and running at right angles to them are double rows of stitching at intervals of about two inches between each pair. The full sleeves are tucked from the shoulder downwards for a few inches, and at the wrist they are gathered into a cuff, which is a band of tiny tucks intersected by numerous rows of stitching.

And here is another labourer. This one favours a fancy dress of Turkish origin. On his feet are buckled shoes. His legs are bare, but his baggy dark-blue cotton knickers hang well below his knees. His short jacket is also dark in colour, but his red vest strikes a bright note of contrast, and makes him stand out as a most decorative figure in the lapis-lazuli landscape or amethyst seascape.

Most of the women you meet are dressed in a very ordinary short cotton skirt and blouse style. Generally speaking, they are not so extraordinarily handsome as to attract special attention, and you mostly linger to look at them because they are doing things which probably you have never seen women doing before—washing

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clothes in a narrow stream, with the pebbles for a scrubbing-board; breaking stones by the roadside; or riding to market on a mule amidst piled-up panniers of figs, grapes, peaches, and nectarines. But sometimes you find yourself losing sight of strange doings, and thinking only of the peasant-woman with whom you are face to face; for not only has she features of far-famed classic beauty, but her magnificent athletic figure reminds you of the Amazons, those world-renowned female warriors who won undying glory in the olden days.

And you will certainly look with great interest at all the Albanian peasant-women you meet. They keep to their national dress, which is a long robe edged with embroidery, and drawn loosely in at the waist with a girdle. Over this they wear a short white woollen jacket with an embroidered black border. For ornaments they have strings of coins round their necks and in their hair. It is very unusual to see one of these women walking or working out of doors without her blanket-looking coat on, even when the sun is so hot that you are feeling the only way to enjoy Greece would be to dress yourself in a cotton bathing-gown and be wheeled about in a cold bath. But I once met a coatless old granny, and she looked as if she had come out in her nightgown by mistake. Her white gown hung loose and straight from top to toe, and the sleeves came flowing out from the neck of it, so that the garment seemed to be all of a piece. It had no collar, and was left open at the throat; but there was a simple line of red embroidery to outline the neck, and similar lines to edge the sleeves.

The priests, too, will always attract your attention,

The Modern Greeks

for not only are their sombre black gowns and high, brimless black hats very noticeable among the pure white and the Oriental colours of the other national costumes, but they wear their hair long.

I am afraid you will be a little disappointed to hear that Greek children do not often wear fancy costumes. At carnival times—the two great national fêtes are New Year's Day and Independence Day (March 25)—boys dress up as clowns, and girls are arrayed in national costume; but in everyday life the girls are clad in simple loose frocks. The boys' suits generally follow the trousers, or loose knickers, and round jacket style; but a frilly tunic "like father's" is nearly as much in favour as the short jacket, and "shirt-sleeves" are common. Blue-and-white check cotton is a very fashionable material for a peasant-boy's suit. Many a time you come across a solitary little figure, who looks very like a ragged duster; but he is not a beggar-boy: he is a poor peasant-child working cheerfully for his living by watching the sheep on a lonely hill-side, or trudging beside the mules up a rough mountain-track.

Up to the present I have been telling you about the clothes worn by the peasants, who form the bulk of the population. Well-to-do merchants, shopkeepers on a large scale, professional men, and their wives, have become quite Western in their ideas of dress, and ladies of means in Athens study and follow the latest Parisian fashions.

But amongst the classes which we have just been speaking of there is a very decided taste for boys' suits of a pattern which you know very well. Little boys, big boys, and youths who would here have long ago

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been promoted to "stand-ups" in collars, are all proud of their sailor costumes, and even the oldest and tallest of them wear those big round straw hats with a broad turned-up brim and a band boasting the name of a ship, such as an English boy of seven would scorn as being only fit for babies.

CHAPTER IV

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS

THE Greeks have the reputation of being civil and friendly to strangers. I am going to show you how much that reputation is worth when it is put to the test.

Judging by my own experience, I should say that a traveller in Greece is constantly in the happy state of feeling that every Greek is his host, and that he is an honoured guest. There were odd moments when I felt inclined to alter my opinion entirely; but as it would be unfair to visit the sins of the few on the kind heads of the many, I shall first introduce you to the Greeks in their rôle of courteous and hospitable hosts to the stranger within their gates.

To begin with the peasants. I had many opportunities of sampling their manners, for I did all my railway travelling third class, lived amongst the poorest natives on their simple native fare, and tramped many a long mile, by night as well as by day, across lonely plains and over wild mountains, far out of reach of any cry for help. My only companion was my friend Charmion,



A DEFENDER OF HIS COUNTRY. *Page 84*

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another Englishwoman who was as absolute a stranger as I in that land. How were we treated ?

In the little villages particularly we attracted much attention, for there strangers are much more of a novelty than in the towns. But as travellers usually go to Greece in parties under the escort of an experienced guide, or at any rate put themselves in charge of a dragoman directly they get there, two stranger women by themselves were rather a remarkable spectacle even to the townspeople. Some of the villagers had never seen such a sight before, they told us in the course of examining our clothes, and asking us a hundred and one questions as to our nationality, how we liked their beautiful scenery, the why and wherefore we had come to their beloved country. In the curiosity we excited there was never a trace of rudeness, and sooner or later it always lost itself in a whole-hearted desire to do something, anything, for us.

Friendliness usually took the practical form of feasting us on national delicacies—fruit, *loukoumi*, the sweet-meat which is known in England as Turkish Delight, and *masticha*, a white liqueur, which turns a milky colour when it is mixed, as it generally is, with water. Hospitality of this kind was frequently lavished on us by peasants at wayside inns, but it was in the trains, above all other places, that we were most persistently entertained. All along the route our fellow-travellers would dive into baskets and bags of produce they were taking to market, and bring out for us luscious green figs or bunches of grapes ; they would share with us the melon they had brought as food and drink for the journey ; from one pocket they would extract a couple

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of monstrous peaches, and from another a knife, with which they would proceed to peel them before offering us their gift; and at every wayside station, where the whole train emptied itself for a walk and a talk, labourers and soldiers would vie with each other in bringing to our carriage window refreshments from the stall which serves as station buffet.

By the shopkeepers we were treated with equal courtesy, and we noticed that the people who sold eatables and drinkables heartily appreciated our preference for native provisions. Had we tasted this and that? If not, we must do so at once. There was not the least necessity to buy if we did not like what we tasted, or did not want anything more. There was more hospitality than business in these invitations to taste and try, and to refuse would have been ungracious, discourteous. Often the experience was pleasant, but I can assure you it sometimes needed courage to sample such fare as sour-smelling goat's-milk cheese scooped out of a barrel, and various titbits fished out of a keg of oil. The prices we were charged did not lead me to suspect that we were being cheated, and on comparing notes with well-known residents of good standing, I found that we were being quite fairly treated in all our little commercial transactions.

Nevertheless, when it comes to doing anything like a business deal with a Greek, it behoves a foreigner to be on his guard. Traders have a keen eye to business. They are said to rival the Jews in making a bargain. In the commercial world they have acquired a reputation for rather "sharp" methods of transacting business, together with a somewhat dim perception of the moral

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responsibility of a promise. Experience leads me to believe that this reputation has not yet been lived down sufficiently to bid you ignore it.

With regard to the professional classes, the Greeks themselves admit that their country is troubled with a somewhat high average of undesirables ; but this is an evil which springs from good. Education is so well cared for in Greece that the poorest boys can become doctors, lawyers, and so forth, provided they have the wish to enter on a professional career, and the ability to pass the necessary examinations. As a result of these national educational facilities, the professional ranks get overcrowded, and the keen competition for a livelihood to which this state of affairs gives rise is apt to suggest dishonourable means of gaining money. This problem of overcrowded professions, common to many countries, is a particularly difficult one in Greece, where the ways and means of earning a living are very limited. Only about 18 per cent. of the land is cultivable, so it would not do for every boy to want to be a farmer. And Greek boys have very little encouragement to turn their attention to engineering and industrial pursuits, for manufactures cannot flourish in a country triply handicapped by lack of coal, water-power, and capital.

Let me take you back among friends. One letter of introduction to a man of any standing in the reputable section of the professional classes, together with an interest in art and literature, will quickly carry a stranger into the midst of the aristocracy of Greek intellect ; for the hospitable Greek to whom that letter is presented will not only extend his own warm hand of welcome to his visitor, but take any trouble to bring him into

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contact with the particular authorities he is anxious to meet.

The Greeks, particularly the peasants, have a very gracious way of replying to any expression of gratitude for services voluntarily performed by them on a stranger's behalf. To the merest "Thank you," for anything they do, they answer quite simply : "It is my duty."

CHAPTER V

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS (*continued*)

It is a very common thing to see Greek men of all classes carrying a string of beads. The strings are all lengths, the beads of all kinds, ranging, according to the poverty or wealth of the owner, from the necklet size of a coloured glass variety, such as you can buy here for a penny, to a long, costly chain of real amber finished off with a magnificent yellow tassel. What do you think the beads are for ? They are just playthings—nothing more nor less—strange as it may seem to you that grown-ups should have playthings, and be so fond of them that they carry them about wherever they go. The men like to have something to fidget with, and as they walk along or sit talking to one another their fingers are constantly roving over their beads, twisting one round and round, moving two or three backwards and forwards, or sliding them all up and down the string on which they are loosely threaded.

Greek men are great talkers. The habit of never

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losing an opportunity of hearing themselves speak seems to be born in their blood as an offshoot of the oratorical skill for which the old Greeks were famous. Politics are their favourite topic; currants come a good second, as the greatest source of national wealth and individual prosperity. They group themselves round little tables in the gay city square, under the verandas of town cafés, and beneath the rudely timbered awnings, picturesquely interlaced with leafy twigs, without the rough-and-tumble wooden shanties that boast the name of café in the little villages. Here they sit for hours on end, criticizing the Government, discussing what ought to be done and what ought not to be done in the best interests of the nation, or prophesying what sort of currant harvest they are likely to have this year. Occasionally one man pauses to sip his coffee; a neighbour fortifies himself with *loukoumi*; a third, having scored a point, calls for another *masticba* before starting off on a fresh line of argument. The conversation buzzes on continuously in spite of a momentary lull in this corner or that.

Presently a new-comer sits down. He gives his order to the waiter, and unfolds the latest edition of his favourite paper. Unless you can read Greek, you wonder how he can make head or tail of the twisty-twirly squirligigs that clamber up and down the lines, and carry on the quaintest-looking dumb-show all over the pages. He is soon following their antics with rapt attention, for every Greek carefully reads at least one newspaper a day. But if you wait long enough, you will be sure to see him lean over to his nearest neighbour and point to some paragraph. The two exchange remarks, and in

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another moment they are plunged in a whirlpool of political controversy.

Meanwhile you have noticed another new-comer. He has singled out a vacant spot, and is sitting on a low chair drowsily smoking a nargileh. This is like the Turkish hookah, which you have seen in pictures, I expect. There is a big water-bottle with a long piece of tubing attached to it at one end and to a gaily corded and tasselled pipe at the other, all so arranged that the smoke is cooled by passing through water. You are just beginning to be quite certain that the man with the nargileh is smoking in his sleep, when suddenly he rises to his feet, walks across to one of the little tables near by, and flings himself with fever-heat into the discussion that is going on there.

The coffee served at every class of Greek café is a Turkish brew. A sickly sweet concoction, three parts dregs, is handed to the customer in a tiny cup, and he immediately drops more sugar into it. You would think that the national drink of a hot country would be a cool, refreshing draught, not a hot, treacly syrup, wouldn't you? The other very common Greek drink, *masticha*, is cold, but it, too, is of a syrupy nature. With their meals all the Greeks drink wine. The peasants make theirs at home from the juice of the grapes grown in their own vineyards, so it costs them little or nothing; and the people who do not make wine can buy a big bottle for a few pence in this land of grapes. Not only do the grown-ups drink it, but it is given to quite small children as a matter of course, just as naturally as little people here are given a glass of water, a mug of milk, or a cup of weak tea. Do not imagine, however, that

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the Greeks are a drunken nation. They usually mix water with their wine, and it is a most rare thing to see one of them intoxicated. All the wine brewed for native consumption has resin mixed with it. This helps to keep it good. Moreover, the Greeks like the peculiar flavour it produces. But unless you have a taste for turpentine you would not like it, any more than I did, or other foreigners do.

Think of the national beverages of Greece—sickly sweet thick coffee, a syrupy liqueur, and turpentine wine! Are you surprised to hear that the stranger in this sunny, dusty country is often consumed with thirst? You think he can always fly to water. Alas for him if he does! The water in many districts is quite unfit to drink. The Greeks seem to have become more or less inoculated against typhoid by constantly drinking impure water, but woe betide the foreigner who is equally daring. In Athens, where the water is particularly bad, I was particularly careful. I bought what I drank “neat”—pure, cold spring-water brought down in earthen amphoræ from Mount Hymettos, or carried twelve miles into the city from a spring at Amarousi. Often the supply taken to the city in the morning is exhausted by lunch-time, and when in such cases I had failed to lay in a sufficient store, I went without. The only other way I drank water in Athens was boiled—in tea made from a treasured small allowance that the Customs officers had let me bring from England. But in spite of all precautions I was doomed. I had bad dreams one restless night, and woke up in the morning feeling very languid. However, I got up, and after dressing myself with difficulty, went out. I tried to be

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interested in the old temple I went to see, reminded myself that for years I had been longing for this my first visit to it, looked up at the magnificent columns, but they might have been clothes-props for all I could bring myself to care just then. My limbs were aching, my head was burning, ton-weights were jangling in my brain as they tugged at my weary eyes. Charmion took me back home, and put me to bed. The fight was over so far as any conscious effort on my part was possible, and the fever had won. I remember thinking I would give everything I possessed for a glass of water ; I remember trying to explain to somebody that good water could be bought in Athens, and thinking that somebody was a brute to say " Yes," and then pour down my throat a nasty tepid thick fluid—goat's milk, I discovered afterwards. A kind Greek doctor-man nursed me day and night till I turned the corner. For all he knew to the contrary, I should never be able to pay him a penny, but I was a stranger, so it was his " duty " to make sure that his instructions were properly carried out by carrying them out himself. The first thing I asked him when I again began to take an interest in life was : " How on earth did I get it ? I've been on a sort of besieged city allowance of cold water since I've been here, and what I have drunk I bought—the good spring kind, you know."

He smiled. " You can't depend on what you buy unless you know the people you buy it from. The nearest spot where they can draw any sort of water spells ' Mount Hymettos ' or ' Amarousi ' to some of the boys who are sent to the springs."

I had a particular reason for telling you what the

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Greeks drink before telling you what they eat. Many of them hardly ever have what you would call a meal. To the poor peasants their wine is meat and drink, the mainstay of their bodily existence. The other items of their everyday fare are a poor sort of coarse brown bread or a close maize kind that is often as dry as chaff, and a choice between fruit in due season, a few beans, a handful of olives, and a piece of sour-smelling goat's-milk cheese. Now and again, as a treat, they indulge in some dried Labrador cod-fish. Many of them cannot afford meat more than a dozen times in the whole year, and others can only indulge in it once a year as a very special treat. With the townspeople it is a very general custom to have meals out. Public restaurants are a feature of the hotels, and many others having no such connection rub shoulders in both big and little streets. Weather permitting, as it generally does, tables are spread on the pavement fronting the restaurants, in gardens opening out of them, in the city squares, and on seaport quays. At the large establishments in Athens French dishes are served, and the menu is written in French ; but at the smaller places the bill of fare is essentially Greek. A characteristic soup has egg and lemon in it. Meat can generally be obtained in slices off the joint, but the most popular native dish of a substantial nature is *pilafi*, after the style of Italian *risotto*—a rich, savoury, boiled rice-pudding, with or without scraps of meat in it. Emaciated fowls are common. Puddings, as we understand them, are unknown, their place in the menu being taken by fruit, pastry, and ices.

The custom of taking everyday meals in public, and out of doors when possible, is common to other European

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countries, but each time an English traveller comes into touch with it he feels it is a novelty, because of the contrast with what he is used to at home. Think how much you would enjoy the experience of lunching at a little table on the pavement, or going to a big public dinner-party in an open square, with a band to play merry tunes to you. But to Greek children in the towns such things are no treat. To them, quiet meals with father and mother would be much more of a novelty.

CHAPTER VI

A PEEP AT ATHENS

You are all excitement ; the next station is Athens ; in a few minutes you will be in the capital of Greece. You are thinking of the many wonderful things that are waiting for you in one of the most famous old treasure-cities of the world, when presently the train pulls up. You hang out of the window, see a modest platform backed by some unpretentious railway buildings, and make up your mind that this is a suburban stopping-place. You are trying to possess your disappointed soul in patience till the train shall be ready to take you on, when a porter invites you to alight.

“Going on to Athens,” you tell him.

“This is Athens,” he replies, holding out a hand for your bag.

You tumble out, and stand looking around you bewildered, disconsolate, like a dreamer rudely torn from

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fairyland to be hurled, half awake, into a mean-looking corner of real life. As you follow porter and luggage to one of the little open carriages waiting in an any-sort-of space without, you look back, and say to yourself that a capital which cannot boast a better station than that must indeed be a poor sort of a city in comparison with what you have been led to imagine. But this first impression of Athens only makes the surprise that is in store for you all the more enchanting, for however beautiful you have pictured the city in your wildest dreams, in reality it is far more beautiful.

Athens of to-day has a dual existence. It consists of the very ancient city which raised itself to the political position of leader of Greece in the fifth century B.C., and established its claims to be recognized as the mother of Greek art and learning, and of the modern city, with its two large squares, some good streets, splendid houses, palatial hotels, and fine public buildings, which has sprung up in the interval since 1834, when Athens, then a poor village of about three hundred houses, was chosen by Modern Greece as her new seat of government.

I am going to take you straight to the old city first of all. There, away in the distance, looking down from the top of a hill, is the ancient Athenian citadel, the Acropolis. Round the foot of the Acropolis Hill are perfect remains and magnificent ruins of the old city that was built without the fortress walls as the population increased, art and literature sprung to life, manufactures were founded, commerce was established with the great markets of the ancient world, and Athens grew up from a little garrison to a big, strong, beautiful, and flourishing centre of political supremacy, commercial activity,

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Parthenon, while I talk to you for a few minutes about the Greek master-builders whose work still adorns the Acropolis, and entices artistic pilgrims not only to many other parts of Greece besides Athens, but to Italy, Sicily, and Asia Minor, where they worked with equal skill and industry.

CHAPTER VII

THE MASTER-BUILDERS OF GREECE

GREECE is the proud possessor of two rich architectural inheritances. The one was bequeathed to her by the Mycenæan builders, the other by the pure Greek or Hellenic builders.

The Mycenæan builders were at work in the land more than three thousand years ago—in the Wonder Age, before the Hellenes rose to power. They were sons of a rich, highly cultured, and mighty kingdom, of which the chief towns were Mycenæ, Argos, and Tiryns, in the district between the Gulfs of Corinth and Nauplia. Recently it has been discovered that this old Mycenæan kingdom was an offshoot of a much older, more powerful, and more highly cultured nation, whose headquarters were the island of Crete. The Cretans were highly skilled in the art of building. As long as four, or maybe five, thousand years ago they were erecting well-planned, vast, and magnificent palaces. If ever you go to Crete, you will be able to see the ruins of these marvellous palaces, and how your heart will beat with excitement

The Master-Builders of Greece

as you stand before one of them ! It is believed to be the Palace of Minos, the very place where he kept the monster Minotaur in the Labyrinth.

The Cretan architects, builders, and decorators must have had extraordinary intelligence, stupendous knowledge, vivid imagination, and wondrous skill. In the vast areas of buildings that have recently been unearthed at Phæstos and Knossos spacious open courts are approached by unrivalled flights of steps ; great halls opening out of these courts are entered through magnificent pillared porches ; corridors branch off in every direction, leading to living-rooms, state apartments, and sacred precincts ; staircases lead to upper stories ; magazines, long and wide galleries for the storage of supplies and the safe deposit of valuables, are guarded by massive walls ; there is a thoroughly scientific drainage system ; there are frescoes and ornamental stonework. And still I have not told you about half the wonders of these palaces that carry us back four thousand years or more, and challenge us to produce anything in modern architecture that can outrival them. Now, when I tell you about the wonderful things done in Greece by the Mycenæan builders, you will believe what would sound impossible if you did not know they were the descendants of a great building family.

In making walls and framing openings the Mycenæans used gigantic stone blocks, which look as though they must have been rent asunder from the mountains by Titanic hands, borne to the scene of building operations on Titanic shoulders, and piled on high or hoisted aloft by Titanic arms to take their place in a Titanic abode.

Famous among the existing remains of their work is

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the Lion Gate at Mycenæ, a most wonder-striking feat, by which three giant stones are made to outline an entrance-space. Two of the stones, each 10½ feet high, stand up as posts, and balanced on the top of them is a monster lintel 16½ feet long, 8 feet broad, and more than 3 feet thick in the middle. Above is a triangular block, bearing the sculptured likeness of two weird-looking beasts. These are the lions rampant after which the gate is named. The Lion Gateway was the principal entrance to the Acropolis of Mycenæ.

The Mycenæans were also the designers and makers of the "beehive" tombs that are found at Mycenæ and in other parts of Greece. These tombs are cut out of and constructed within a hill, and their picturesque shape is well described by the name that has been given them. They look exactly like the inside of a beehive might if it were scooped out of a piece of rock, only they are so many times bigger that you must imagine them as enormous underground rooms. The finest of the beehive tombs yet discovered is the one at Mycenæ, which is sometimes called the "Tomb of Agamemnon," sometimes the "Treasury of Atreus."

I will make one more attempt to give you the very faintest idea of the Brobdingnagian methods of these early builders in Greece. This time I will ask you to try to grasp a few facts about one of their citadels. The citadel of Tiryns was 980 feet long, and about 330 feet broad. It was terraced into upper and lower divisions, and on the former stood a vast palace. The whole fortress was surrounded by a massive wall, made up for the most part of blocks of stone from 6 feet to 10 feet long, and 3 feet wide. These blocks were piled on the top of

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The Master-Builders of Greece

each other, and when they did not exactly fit the spaces between were filled up with smaller stones. The height of this encircling wall is said to have been 65 feet, and its average thickness 26 feet.

If you can form the very least idea of size and weight from figures, you will not be at all surprised to hear that in the days not long ago, when ancient Crete was buried deep, and history had nothing to tell about the ancestors of the Mycenæans, people were inclined to believe that the first builders in Greece belonged to an extraordinary race of giants. Their work was then, and is still, often called by the distinguishing name "Cyclopean," after the fairy-tale giants who tore asunder from the hills mighty rocks, and flung their gigantic missiles high o'er the waves at Ulysses in an endeavour to wreck that hero's ship during one of the most perilous of all his exciting adventures.

The second great architectural inheritance of Greece is the work of the Hellenes, men who won for themselves for all time a place of honour among the world's master-builders. These are the men who built the Parthenon, where we are now talking together about them, and who glorified not only Athens, but all mainland Greece, her islands, and her colonies, with magnificent temples, great market-places with colonnaded promenades, vast arenas for athletic sports, and open-air theatres embosomed in a hill-side, with tier upon tier of seats sweeping up and around in majestic semicircular array.

Since the Hellenic builders are commonly known as the Greek builders, we will call them by that name.

It is thought that the Greek builders were descended in some way from the Mycenæans. There are good

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reasons for this belief, but at present there are missing links in the chain of evidence by which it is hoped some day to link up the work of Cretan, Mycenæan, and Greek builders into a continuous story.

You will be quite justified, therefore, in *thinking* that the Greeks learned something about building from earlier artists and craftsmen who worked in their country. You may be certain that they learned various things from more distant neighbours, for as Greece was brought into close contact with the East they had many opportunities of studying the highly developed science and art of such great Oriental builders as the Assyrians and Egyptians. But above all things you may be positive that the building instinct was inborn in the Greeks, that it was one of Nature's greatest gifts to the nation; for the Greek builders were artists. What they saw they did not merely copy, what they learned they did not just repeat. Their work may suggest that they were students in this or that school, but it will always make you feel that they were ideal students, to whom education was but a foundation for originality. It may remind you of such and such an older building which may have inspired beautiful Greek forms and decorative designs, but you will always feel in these the warm, vital breath of the creator, never see the cold, lifeless hand of the copyist. And the more you see of the work of these master-builders, the more conscious you will be that the main sources of their inspiration were their own magnificent country, their own religion, their own national spirit.

The Greeks built in three distinct styles, which are always called "Orders." These three Greek Orders are named Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian.

The Master-Builders of Greece

The Doric Order is the oldest. The simplest way I can help you to recognize it is to tell you that it is very plain and massive; that the columns have no base or foot; that the shoulder or *capital* of each column bulges at the bottom, and has a square slab on the top; and that the frieze or middle part of the entablature is divided vertically into strips. Every other strip is a *metope*—a space left blank or ornamented with sculpture—and the strips in between are grooved. The Parthenon is the noblest example of the use of this Order.

The Ionic Order has a very distinctive feature in its capital, which curves gracefully round into scrolls.

The Corinthian Order also has a distinctive capital. It is bell-shaped, and ornamented with acanthus-leaves.

Less than half a century ago much of the work of both the Mycenæan and Greek builders was buried deep down out of sight, together with rich treasures of sculpture, vases, metal-work, and jewellery that are now to be seen in various museums in Greece, notably in the National Museum at Athens. English, French, German, and American art-lovers have helped Modern Greece with money, brains, muscles, and enthusiasm to unearth much of her buried inheritance of ancient wealth and splendour. As your debt to the master-builders of Greece has become mixed up with an international debt to the excavators of that country, I am particularly anxious that you should not picture an excavating scene as so many people do—two or three bald-headed professors grubbing among dust and ashes for gruesome skulls, dry bones, lifeless stones, and any old dead thing, the uglier the better, over which they can get up an argument. Excavating

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is one of the most exciting forms of exploration that you can possibly imagine. If I tell you what a well-known excavator of the present day has said about it you will, I hope, be able to conjure up a truer and far more fascinating scene than the oft-imagined one against which I have warned you. Listen! Do you think these sound like the cold-blooded sentiments of a Professor Dryasdust?

“The most intense excitement which I have ever felt is that of excavating. An artist who is overcome by this passion should describe the surroundings in which archæological researches are being made, should reproduce from life the anxiety of the first attempts, describe the technique of the pits and trenches, and the coming to light of the documents which speak when history is silent. If the artist and the archæologist could transmit to the reader the enthusiasm and excitement which he feels while standing among the labourers when the pick gives a hollow sound and the ground echoes as a presage of new discoveries; if he could show the hands which tremble as they grope in the earth, or timidly pass over the fragments of a work of art to remove the coating of dust which hides it; if he could explain the hidden power of excavation to exalt the mind, and the insistent, almost childish call on Fortune to grant new treasures, he would write, not a book, but a romance, a drama of the human soul which seeks the unknown” (Dr. Angelo Mosso in “The Palaces of Crete and their Builders”).

A Peep at Athens

CHAPTER VIII

A PEEP AT ATHENS (*continued*)

You are still on the Acropolis, standing on a rock platform amidst majestic marble forms that have been tanned from glistening white to rich warm orange and russet tints, melting into glowing topaz and delicate amber hues. What a panorama unfolds itself as you look down, up, and around! Behold, amidst the slopes which billow round the foot of the Acropolis Hill there is another beautiful Greek building, another, and yet others, and there, in striking contrast to their straight-lined dignity, are massive round arches, telling in the poetry of curves the story of how the Romans conquered Greece, and how they, too, became a great building nation. Watch how the modern town is stealthily advancing over the plains, but there are still fine stretches of open country where olive-groves play stately games with the sun or sleep peacefully in their own shadow, untroubled by any immediate fear of being turned out of their ancient home by houses and shops. Look how the sea in the distance borders a long coast-line with a deep blue hem embroidered with silvery islands! See how the mountains enfold Athens in their giant arms!

When you have looked at the changing scenes of the Athenian panorama from every angle of the Acropolis at one particular hour of the day, you have by no means come to the end of the magnificent show. At every hour of the day these scenes change colour. With a change of temperature tones fade or deepen. Thus, at

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dawn-break you may see Athens gleaming opalescent, at sun-height glittering every shade of blue from palest turquoise to deepest sapphire, at sunset glowing mauve, amethyst, violet, and right royal purple ; and inset among these great masses of rich milky opal, shaded blues, or variegated purples are the characteristic patches of local colour in which some of the hills, valleys, and marble temples clothe themselves at stated times of day. At sunset Hymettos dons a mantle of the most delicate rose-pink tint ; in the early morning sunshine the bed of the Ilissus has a peacock coverlet ; in the full glare of sunshine the Acropolis is robed in golden-brown. And now, having given you some sunlight peeps into this enchanted kaleidoscope, I will leave you to picture yourself looking down at Athens from the Acropolis, or up at the Acropolis from Athens, in the fantastic moonlight.

Before we leave the Acropolis, let us go and stand up by the little Temple of Nike. Look at the scene before you. It is the very picture which, in the hour of sunset, Byron describes so vividly, so graphically, in "The Corsair":

" Slow sinks, more lovely ere his race be run,
Along Morea's hills the setting sun ;
Not, as in Northern climes, obscurely bright,
But one unclouded blaze of living light !
O'er the hush'd deep the yellow beam he throws
Gilds the green wave, that trembles as it glows,
On old Ægina's rock and Idra's isle,
The god of gladness sheds his parting smile ;
O'er his own regions lingering, loves to shine,
Though there his altars are no more divine.
Descending fast the mountain shadows kiss
Thy glorious gulf, unconquer'd Salamis !
There azure arches through the long expanse
More deeply purpled meet his mellowing glance,

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And tenderest tints, along their summits driven,
Mark his gay course, and own the hues of heaven ;
Till, darkly shaded from the land and deep,
Behind his Delphian cliff he sinks to sleep."

And now we will run down the long hill, up which we dragged ourselves step by step when we were coming to take a peep at the Athenian citadel.

On the lower ground there are many remains of ancient Athens, among which I think you would enjoy wandering for a few moments before we dive into the modern town.

Here is the Theseum, a finely preserved Doric temple dating from about 465 B.C.

Not far off is a very much smaller and quite different type of building. It is a circular monument of fine design, roofed in with a single block of marble, and crowned with an ornament. The ornament supplies the key to the reason for which the monument was erected. It supported a triangular slab of marble whereon rested the bronze tripod won by Lysicrates, who in 335 B.C. was awarded the prize for the best-trained tragic chorus. This *Choragic Monument of Lysicrates* is a type of the monuments that were erected to commemorate the victories gained by athletic and artistic competitors in the Grecian festivals. There used to be a whole "Street of Tripods" at Athens.

Here is a great curved hollow in a side of the Acropolis Hill. This is the world-renowned Theatre of Dionysus. What stirring tales it has to tell of the vast crowds, sometimes thirty thousand strong, that foregathered here to watch a play by this or that favourite and famous national dramatist ! You can still see many of the seats of the

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multitude and some of the seats of the mighty. The masses sat round on the semicircular stone benches ; the priests and high dignitaries had marble thrones in the middle of the front rows. The performances took place in the daytime, and lasted for hours on end. That was in the days when the Greeks took the drama seriously. It was bound up with their religion, was a vital part of their national life. Nowadays they prefer a cinematograph show !

Here is the " old " stadium, looking spick and span, for a few years ago it was completely restored, with the object of reviving the ancient national games. Close by are some of the magnificent Corinthian columns of the ancient Temple of Jupiter Olympus, and another little walk brings us to the Tower of the Winds—an octagonal building named after symbolic figures of the chief winds, with which it is ornamented in sculpture. It was designed for a very useful life. It housed a water-clock, and acted as a sundial and a weathercock.

Near this tower is the street shown in one of the illustrations, and I am sure you will like to have the picture as a memento ; for it is your first glimpse of the quarter in Modern Athens that will fascinate you more than any other part of the town. There is a Western atmosphere about the rest of the new city. Trams run up and down the wide streets, the shops display French goods, the houses are handsomely-ordinary looking, the people you see about are more or less smartly attired in clothes such as you are accustomed to see at home.

But in the neighbourhood of this street you feel the Eastern strain in native Greece, and if you have ever heard " the East a-callin'," how you will revel in this



THE ACROPOLIS, ATHENS. *Page 28.*

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A Peep at Athens

sudden, unexpected plunge into an atmosphere which has something of the Oriental in it !

Look at the goods displayed for sale in this "Bazar Oriental," which quite frankly caters for tourist as well as native custom. Here are the red shoes with large black woollen pompons, as worn by so many of the peasants. The embroidered garments are peasant-costumes. The little embroidered bags are made up as "souvenirs" from the bottom hem or sleeves of such costumes. You will certainly buy one, and just as certainly you will persuade yourself that your particular specimen has been manufactured from part of a brigand's coat. The big bags, which you will recognize as akin to the carpet-bags sometimes used by our country cousins, are made of coloured hemp. They are much in favour with the peasants for taking their vegetables to market, for carrying provisions for a journey, and for taking home their various purchases. Beads, jewellery, Oriental carpets and rugs, and old embroideries are also among the chief articles for sale at this emporium, where everything glows with colour, where crude bright patches of vermilion, indigo, and gamboge first strike your eye, and make the barbarian in you jump with joy as you become the proud possessor of this or that new trifle, and where rich harmonies of faded and washed-out old rose, silvery blue, lemon-gold, and terra-cotta rouse the artist in you till your heart aches and your hands itch to run away with all the costly old stuffs you see.

We turn the corner round by this "Bazar," and find ourselves in a very narrow street lined with shops, mostly open-fronted. The shopkeepers are Greeks or Turks; some idle about the doors, others sit in the doorways

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busily at work. One narrow street leads into another. We are in a maze of alleys, and each alley has its special trade. In one we are amongst the bag-makers, in another we find the shoemakers, in another the makers and menders of pots and pans, or the harness-makers, who seem to spend most of their time in designing and making gay bead-trappings for the mules and donkeys.

Yes, this quarter is noisy, smelly, stuffy, and dirty, I admit, but it is a feature of Modern Athens which makes you feel that Greece must still be regarded as part of the Near East.

A Walk to Delphi

CHAPTER IX

A WALK TO DELPHI

OUR steamer dropped anchor at Itea, the port of Delphi, between five and six on a September afternoon of last year. We were rowed ashore in a tub-like little boat, and instead of being met at the landing-stage, as we had expected, by a rabble clamouring to drive us up, we were allowed to set foot on the steps unmolested. It was not the season for visitors. The half-dozen or so men and boys who had collected on the primitive quay were all clustering round the only other folk who had come ashore—two American women, with a dragoman and imposing-looking luggage. We were tramps with handbags, so there was no competition for us.

The other drago selected a porter, and piloted his charges to the only carriage to be seen, waiting to order for them.

I was "drago" to Charmion, and went by that name with her throughout our wanderings. In pursuance of my duties, I had just settled with our boatman. Charmion, meanwhile, had picked up both our bags, and was absent-mindedly watching the party drive away. Now it was that I saw a man in his shirt-sleeves seize the bags

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red shoes, patched cotton trousers, and a duster-print tunic, followed a few paces behind ; arm in arm, Charmion and I brought up the rear. The man had the air of a martyr ; the mule ambled on dejectedly. *They* knew what lay before them. Charmion and I were a very happy couple, in blissful ignorance of everything save the prospect of a joyful expedition and the delight of wandering in the open with eyes fronting the mountain among mountains whither we were bound.

At a bend in the road we turned to wave a final farewell to friend Diamandes, who stood watching the last of us in the middle of the road outside his inn ; then we fell to regretting that Delphi was not twice the distance away. We had been cooped up on a little Greek steamer all day ; it was glorious to be able to stretch our legs again without having to dodge boxes, packages, and cockroaches. By taking the pedestrian path we should be up at Delphi before nine, reckoning according to our guide-book time-allowance for the journey, and we were in the mood to walk on till midnight !

For the first twenty minutes or so nothing happened to damp our ardour. We were tramping at a steady pace along a good open road, with beautiful vineyards to right and left ; then all in a moment the sun toppled back over the horizon, and we were plunged into utter darkness at the precise moment when the mule headed off to the right and entered a thick olive-grove. The last thing we caught sight of was the man beckoning to us to follow. We groped our way forward as fast as possible, and having caught up with the man, kept to heel. An impenetrable blackness enshrouded us. Neither of us voiced fear—it would have been fatal to own up

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even to ourselves that there was anything to be afraid of—but here we were completely shut in, alone with a stranger man, a guide procured for us by another stranger man.

On comparing notes afterwards, Charmion and I found that our thoughts were running in the same groove. We were trying to remember precisely the emphatic terms in which the guide-book extolled the state of public safety in Greece, thinking of the last evening before we left home, when I had solemnly read the paragraph aloud to her anxious mother ; trying to laugh to ourselves in the spirit we had laughed aloud on the very afternoon we left England, when, a few minutes before the train started, a friend, influential in the theatrical world, had promised to organize a benefit performance to provide the ransom should we be captured by brigands. What a hopelessly delicious promise it had sounded to me in particular, for the triple bill was to consist of *my* one-act plays. But all the time we were in that olive-grove we were expecting our guide suddenly to turn on us with a request for our purses ; we felt the first grip of a hand roughly seizing us ; we saw him going away, leaving us prostrate on the ground, maimed, maybe murdered. And riding riot over all lighter and reassuring thoughts were two solemnly disconcerting facts. We had heard that stray brigands are still to be met occasionally in solitary Greek spots, and we had with us a letter to the Crown Prince of Greece given us by a Greek gentleman before we left London “in case of accidents.”

What an interminable distance it seemed through that black olive-grove ! We were both silently trying to

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comfort ourselves with the reflection that if our companion meant "business," he had already had plenty of time and good opportunity for an initial move. Really, he seemed to be an honest fellow, after all, and—the inky blackness was melting into a dull grey. We strained our eyes. What joy! The end of the olive-grove was in sight. Beyond was shadowland, but how good it would be to have even a moment's respite in the open. Surely the moon would be lighting up soon, and the stars would be shining, and then—we were pressing forward through a thick black curtain into the murky beyond. In another second we should be able to breathe freely—in that other second, out of the shadows ahead crept three figures with guns on their shoulders, dogs at their sides.

Brigands—accomplices—we were caught by design in the very mouth of the trap! Two women to one man, we might have had a ghost of a chance in a scuffle in the grove; we might have escaped, and hidden ourselves among the trees; but here, where we could be descried in the dimness, we were two women to four men and three fierce-looking dogs, miles and mountains beyond earshot of anyone who might be disposed to answer a cry for help.

The bravest adventurer with imagination may feel "jumpy" in the course of long-drawn-out second by second, minute after minute, of waiting for a possible something with which he will have to grapple; but alas for the traveller who flinches when face to face with real danger! The chances are 100 to 1 against escape, and even though luck may carry him through safely this time, his wandering days are numbered. He can no longer

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rely on his nerves in a crisis. The quicker he gets back to fireside, armchair, and slippers, the better it will be for himself, and the better still will it be for his more trustworthy wanderer friends, who run the risk of being victimized by him as a travelling-companion.

A second after the men loomed on our path Charmion broke a long silence.

“Same old story, drago ; I’m getting hungry.”

“Beaten you this time. I’ve been hungry for a good half-hour without so much as a murmur. We had the last of my chocolate on the boat. Any of yours left ?”

To the tune of commonplace banter we had evenly pursued our way to meet the brigands. We were on a line with them.

“Καλ’ ἑσπέρα σᾶς [Good-evening],” I gave them greeting.

“Καλ’ ἑσπέρα σᾶς,” they nodded back, as they plunged into the grove. We passed on into the open. They were watchmen on their way to the plains for the night to mount lonely guard over the vineyards !

CHAPTER X

A WALK TO DELPHI (*continued*)

AFTER emerging from the olive-grove we began to ascend. Over one rugged mound after another we climbed up, up and ever up, without getting much farther on our way. Sometimes we struck a beaten track—in reality very rough, but quite smooth com-

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pared with the rougher hillsides. We would make a détour to follow it, but almost as soon as we had fallen into the swing of a quicker pace the track would lose itself in a steep, stony expanse. And all the time we were threading our way through the darkness, for the moon did not rise at all that night, and never a star came out to help us on our way.

At last there peered down at us from a hill-top the lights of a village.

"Delphi!" I cried excitedly to Charmion.

"I thought we were never going to get there, didn't you?" she panted. "Been a bit of a pull up, hasn't it?"

The man turned, pointing to the lights. Before he could speak I was exclaiming jubilantly:

"Yes, we've seen them. Delphi at last!"

"No," he replied laconically; "Chryso—halfway!"

At Chryso we halted awhile at a ramshackle café. What excitement among the villagers foregathered here for the evening! How they plied us with question after question, chorus of questions after chorus of questions! But how kind they all were! The few chairs in the place were entirely at our disposal. We might have seated ourselves on anyone's favourite corner of any little table; but we preferred to loiter in the doorway under the veranda, while we refreshed ourselves on grapes, and our man, having partaken of one *masticha* and abstemiously refused a second, adjusted the burden on the mule's back.

They gave us a right royal send-off from the café—free grapes . . . best wishes . . . when were we coming down from Delphi? . . . hoped to see us on our way back . . . were we sure we wouldn't have a *masticha*?

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We shouldn't be able to get anything else till we reached Delphi.

One of the men joined our procession. He explained that he was going with us to his house, a little higher up the hill, to get us a lantern.

"On a dark night like this," he added, "you'll be glad of a light. It gets a bit rough farther on."

Gets a bit rough! What could the way ahead be like if it were rougher than the way behind?

We had not left Chryso many minutes before we were clambering up broken-back hills and over great humps of rock, picking our way as well as we could, one foot before the other, among the ragged, cragged depths of their trackless surface covering. No sooner had we manipulated one height than we had to start manœuvring another. At last, worn out to the point of desperation, eyes weary of searching for a foothold, limbs shaken to a state of passive endurance, we stumbled blindly on. Fearful of sprained ankles, we had long forgotten all fear of treachery on the part of our guide; we now forgot all fear of sprained ankles in the momentary terror of losing sight of him. The mule piloted the way, and what a pace the little beast was setting! Yet neither of us had the heart to add our burden to his load. The man carried the lantern, and kept up with the mule. Unless we wanted to be lost among these lonely mountains, it was imperative for us to keep up with the lantern.

No one spoke a word. It seemed hopeless to inquire how much farther on we had to go, and the man was apparently oblivious to our very existence as he silently groped his way ahead.

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But a moment came at length when he turned round, halted, and called back to us. As he waved the lantern upwards the dim outline of a hill-top flickered into sight some yards above.

"Last lap," I said to Charmion, interpreting the gist of the man's explanation that Delphi was round the corner on the top there.

"My last lap, in any case," gasped Charmion, with a gallant but feeble attempt at a laugh.

The top of the hill—a bend to the right—the road—in the near distance an inn, our inn. Like Dorando coming home in the Marathon race, somehow we reached our goal, but how we managed to cover those last few paces in our utterly exhausted condition puzzles us both to this very day. We had been nearly four hours coming up under the adverse conditions of an exceptionally dark night, and anyone who has climbed to Delphi in less time by a better light will tell you what an arduous journey it is, even when you can see to pick out the least bad bits of the very bad way.

But most people drive up from Itēa. The carriage-road first crosses a plain, and then zigzags very gently up the hill to a height of about two thousand feet. This well-kept, zigzag road is a very skilful piece of engineering work.

Mine host of the inn at Delphi is a Greek, who is quite a character in his way. To tell the truth, anyone might be forgiven for summing him up at first sight as an undesirable character to throw in one's lot with. I shall never forget my first sight of him standing outside his door as we approached the inn. I can best describe my feelings by telling you that he looks like an ogre or a

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gargoyle. But his face and figure do him injustice. He is the most indefatigable and most amiable of hosts. His beds are clean, his cooking excellent, and his prices moderate.

He conducted us by candle-light to our room. What a delightful haven it seemed to our weary eyes and aching limbs! yet it was only what we should call at home a poor sort of little place to sleep in. I said we were hungry. What could he suggest at this late hour?

He gave the matter careful consideration. An omelette and a bottle of wine, he ventured to think, would make a nice little supper. We should like the wine he would give us—there was no resin in it.

He left us, and in a minute we heard him giving orders in the kitchen close by. The next minute he was back in our room clearing the wash-stand and laying our supper on it!

We awoke next morning feeling thoroughly refreshed, to tell each other that it was worth all the trials of the previous evening's climb up to get a clean bed to sleep in.

But to see Delphi it would have been worth spending the night as we spent other less fortunate ones in Greece, when beds were beyond the power of Keating, and floors too dirty to lie on—eating biscuits, making tea, and generally playing shipwrecked mariners on our portmanteaus as islands, or sitting curled up on chairs, sleeping with our heads on a table.

On the famous site of Delphi, which has been excavated by the French, there are some magnificent specimens of Greek architecture—as, for example, the theatre and stadium—and scattered among the more perfect buildings are vast expanses of ruins, including the remains of

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the Temple of Apollo, whither the Greeks went to consult the Oracle.

For magnificence of situation the site of Delphi, to my mind, has no rival in all the beautiful land of Greece. I have heard people say that they prefer Olympia. The choice is purely a matter of temperament. Olympia lies in the bosom of wooded hills ; Delphi towers aloft among untamed heights. Nature in her smiling moods may give me passing pleasure, but it is only in her wild, ungovernable humours that she can hold me spell-bound. I wonder, do you feel the same ? If so, we are friends indeed, and I am longing to go to Delphi with you, as you must be wishing to go with me. Come, let the magic of perfect sympathy waft us there—take me back to a spot for which memory makes my heart ache, take you to glean your first remembrance of its potent charm.

We are standing on a hill crown, jewelled with old stones knit together into majestic buildings. See at your feet the ranks of naked hills that have warred against each other for their wilful way down to the valley, and tumbled pell-mell in the fight. Look up at the bare mountains which sweep in a wide circle round your head. How heavily they are deep-scarred with gorges and chasms, yet how proudly, defiantly they stand, ready to fight again with every power in heaven above or in the earth below !

You will not be surprised to hear that, when the day for departure came, Charmion and I were careful to leave Delphi in time to get down to Itea before sunset. I rode back on the mule between the bags ; Charmion, with terrifying recollections of a previous mule-ride, pre-

A Walk to Delphi

ferred to trust her own legs. But really there is no need to be afraid of riding muleback. The little beasts certainly have two habits which are alarming till you make up your mind to get used to them—they stumble freely, and if they are passing a precipice they insist on picking their way along the very edge of it. But if you put your whole faith in them, and just sit tight, they will carry you as safely up and down sheer, rugged hills as across a level, beaten track.

At Itēa we took leave of our trusty guide, and patted the mule farewell at the door of the "best hotel." Diamandes came out to greet us, and insisted on carrying in our bags. The boat that was to take us to Patras would not be in the harbour for an hour, he said, so we must come inside and rest till she arrived. Big rain-drops were beginning to clatter on the quay—the first rain we had seen in Greece—so we hurried in. The boat was more than an hour late, and in the interval of waiting the rain poured in torrents, as though a water-spout were bursting over Itēa, so we were particularly glad to be under shelter.

When at last the steamer came into harbour, Diamandes saw us into the little boat that was to take us aboard, carefully drying two seats for us with his apron before handing us down. We pressed his hand in warm farewell, but I fear we did not tell him how much we appreciated all his courtesies. He was one of the nice people you always want to thank when you have left them, but who go out of their way to be kind to you so naturally that when you are with them you are inclined to take all they do for you as a matter of course.

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CHAPTER XI

STREET AND WAYSIDE SCENES

ONE of the most distinctive sights of the streets is the *loustros*, or shoeblack. He may be a man, but more often than not he is a boy, and a very little fellow at that.

The *loustros* is not at all particular about his own appearance. If, as frequently happens, he is a picturesque ragamuffin as well as a dirty one, he owes it to his good fortune of looks and surroundings. But how different with his kit! One glance at that shows what a pride he takes in it. His box is profusely ornamented with chased brass plates and studded with copper nails, and by the way all the speckless metal-work shines you can easily see he puts his heart into the work of keeping it bright. What a paraphernalia of brushes, bottles, and tins he spreads out before him! Examine them all as carefully as you will, the blacking-brush has never strayed into the brown-paste tin, the browning-brush has never wandered over a black boot, the brown paste is not allowed to hob-nob with the black paste, creams are evidently forbidden to trickle down the sides of their bottles in case they should smear the box, and the polishing-brushes must not fraternize with the mud-brush, the dusting-brush, the paste-brushes or rags.

The workman who takes a pride in his tools may be relied on to take a pride in his work. You will never get your boots better cleaned than by a Greek shoeblack. The *loustros* is kept very busy, for the streets are very muddy on wet days, and very dusty on fine ones, and

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Street and Wayside Scenes

the townspeople who have adopted the Western style of footgear have a decided taste for clean-looking boots and shoes. Moreover, the *loustros* acts in the same capacity as our district messenger boys, and he is equally reliable. If you entrust him with a letter or a parcel you may rest assured that it will be carried speedily and safely to its destination.

The itinerant greengrocer is also a common sight. He, too, is often a boy, and it does not matter how small he is so long as he can count the bigger varieties of fruit and vegetables, weigh out the smaller kinds, and see that he gets his right money ; for he has no clumsy barrow to trundle, no heavily laden baskets to carry on his arms. By his side walks a donkey laden with panniers of grapes, oranges, figs, or maybe a selection of field and vineyard produce, and the sturdy little beast of burden even takes the scales on his back.

The nut-vendor is another celebrity of the streets and squares. His stall is a large wooden tray on a barrow. Shelled nuts of various kinds are assorted in rows and piles on the tray. By the side of the stall stands a stove for roasting the kernels for such customers as prefer them served cooked, either hot or cold. A favourite variety of nut sold quite cheaply at this stall, raw and cooked, is the soft green-coloured, delicately flavoured nut of the pistachio-tree.

The nut-hawker is not the only street cook. He has a companion in the man or woman who toasts golden shafts of maize by a patch of glowing embers.

The water-seller of Athens is also a prominent figure. With his large, gracefully shaped amphora on his shoulder, he makes a very pretty picture.

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The scenes I have described to you are characteristic of town life in Greece, but you must not forget that most of the people here live a country life. Apart from Athens and a few busy commercial ports, of which more anon, the chief centres of any sort of society whatsoever are little villages dotted along the coast or scattered among the mountains.

At a seaside village you may often watch a boat set sail on a fishing expedition. Here is a peep at such a scene. A very little craft is manned by father, eldest son of about fifteen, and his younger brother, who is not more than twelve. They have "an extra hand" with them—baby brother, who may be six, but looks nearer five.

Look at the size of the boat, the combined "strength" of the crew, the unpretentious fishing apparatus. They do not make you think of a profitable haul to be brought home for sale in a busy market, do they?

I could have taken you to a port, and shown you some fishing-smacks going out or coming home, but the little scene I have chosen in preference will give you a far better idea of the fishing resources of Greece. The Greek fisheries, as a whole, do not yield enough for home needs. A local haul may be heavy enough to allow of a surplus being taken to the nearest inland hamlet, or good enough to be sent to Athens, but more often it is only fit and sufficient for the fisherman, his family, and a few neighbouring customers.

Nevertheless, the sea yields Greece one profitable harvest—bath sponges. When you sail the limpid blue Greek seas on a sunny day you look beneath their surface at hundreds upon hundreds of sponge patches of all sizes,

Street and Wayside Scenes

from very little to very big. The beautiful soft-looking masses of delicate unburnished gold beneath the sparkling waters make you feel that if you dived off the side of your boat you would immediately be plunged into a most glorious water-lily fairyland.

In the rough cuttings that serve as streets in the mountain villages you often meet a peasant-woman spinning as she goes. She has been shopping, as you see from the bag on her arm, or her back is bowed beneath a cumbersome load of faggots that she has been collecting on the hillside. During the journey to and fro she must needs ply her old-fashioned distaff, for she is the wife of a poor peasant, and she must help him toil for a very bare living. The wool she is spinning comes off the backs of the few sheep they own, and it is an important contribution to their means of livelihood. A family group weaving at a loom is also a common village-street sight.

The plains of Greece are practically deserted, except by the crops, for long hours at a time, long periods at a stretch; but in the harvest season they buzz and hum with the business and pleasure of life. To these plains let us now set our faces, to watch them producing the one crop on which half Greece depends for a living, and on which the whole world depends for a very favourite form of food.

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CHAPTER XII

CURRENT LAND

"ALL the currants in all the Christmas puddings I have ever eaten came from Greece."

Every boy and girl, every man and woman, in this country can say that and speak the truth. Are you not already thinking to yourself: "What an enormous number of currants must grow there!"

But I have not yet told you the whole truth. I thought you would grasp its meaning better if I broke it to you a little gently. The fact of the matter is that, with the exception of a few tons of currants grown in Australia for home use, all the currants eaten by all the world, day after day, year in and year out, come from Greece, and have come from there ever since the fruit has been known.

Currants are the sun-dried forms of little seedless grapes which were originally discovered growing around Corinth. To distinguish these grapes from other varieties, they were first called "Corinths." You can easily hear how the word came to be commonly pronounced in the way with which you are so familiar.

The exact date of the discovery of currants is not on record, so far as I can find out after careful inquiry; but it must have been nearly a hundred years ago at least, for I have seen an old record of the quantity of currants exported by Greece, and the first entry in it was for the year 1816. These earliest statistics ever kept of the trade were entered in this book by an English merchant. It

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has been kept up to date since then by his descendants, who have carried on his business. It was shown me by one of them—a leading currant merchant of Patras—with the remark: "The Greeks are no statisticians. When they want facts and figures about their currant trade, they come to the English growers and traders, and they have to come to this old book to make any far-back references."

I am going to tell you what I learned, to show you how the fruit has crept into popularity. In 1816 England purchased 1,572 tons of currants; she now buys about 70,000 tons annually. From 1816 to 1819 the yearly average of all the currants grown in Greece was from 9,000 to 10,000 tons; in 1919 the currant-crop was estimated at 145,000 tons, and the yield was even larger just before the World War.

Currants are the most obstinate of all the fruits of the earth. They absolutely refuse to grow unless they are planted where they fancy, and exactly what they want in the way of nourishment no one has yet been able to find out. They will flourish in one spot, run to seed in another a stone's-throw away, and stubbornly resist every effort to make them take root a stone's-throw away from that. The Greeks found out two of their vagaries after paying for the revelations with many barren vineyards—they will only grow near the sea, and it is hopeless to plant them above a height of two thousand feet. But they are by no means to be relied on when indulged in these fancies. To tell the plain truth, no one has ever been able to be sure when he planted a currant vineyard that it was going to pay him for his trouble. Only by experiments, often costing very dear, have the currant-loving districts been located.

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Experimental planting was tried in many lands, but for nearly a century currants could not be induced to grow anywhere outside their native country, and not in all parts of that ; so it came to pass that Greece found herself in possession of what seemed for long years a special gift bestowed on her by Nature. It was only quite recently that the unpleasant surprise was sprung on Greece that the little fruit was consenting to grow in parts of Australia. But currant-growing is still in its infancy in our colony, which cannot yet produce a sufficient quantity of the fruit for her own needs. She is still a customer for Greek currants, and it is still to Greece that the world, as customer, has to take all her demands for this fruit.

Currants dominate the prosperity of Greece. They are her main source of wealth, making up one-half of the total value of her exports. They have given rise to flourishing manufactures in connection with the trade. Directly they affect a large proportion of the population, for the vineyards are not the property of a few rich landowners, but are split up among a great number of moderately well-to-do peasant proprietors ; indirectly they affect the whole country through the large share of profits on the trade paid as export duty into the national exchequer. Little wonder that all Greece takes a highly excited interest in the currant harvest, and that half the population tend currants, talk currants, think currants, dream currants from one year's end to another.

The currant vineyards of Greece are all in the south of the country. They make a margin round the coast from Corinth to Kalamata, via Patras, and cover part of the small plains in the islands of Zante and Cephalonia

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close by. The vines are richly productive, but their cultivation is a matter of considerable trouble and expense.

In January the vines must be pruned.

In February the vineyards are hoed over, the soil is piled up into hillocks, and a trench is dug round each vine, so that it may get the full benefit of any rain that may fall.

In March the vineyards are levelled, and now follows a very busy time. There are two microbes which are bitter foes of the currant-vines, by name *Peronosporos* and *Oidium*. To guard against the deadly onslaught of *Peronosporos* the vines have to be well sprayed with a solution of sulphate of copper and lime; to ward off *Oidium* they must all be well dosed with sulphur. During the process of the sulphur treatment the vineyards are the scene of a most odd-looking performance. Numbers of men, each armed with a little pair of bellows, take possession of them, and as they walk about busily blowing, out from the bellows fly showers of sulphur over the vines.

In May, when the fruit is set, the work of "ring-cutting" begins. With a knife that looks like a miniature fag-hook an incision is made round the bark of each vine, to prevent the sap running down. By this means moisture is thrown up into the fruit, which would otherwise be very much smaller than the tiny little currants as you know them.

After ring-cutting comes the business of thinning out the leaves, for even under the blazing sky overhead the fruit would not ripen to perfection if it were allowed to remain hidden away amongst the very thick foliage.

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Currant-vines grow in bush form. The bushes, now fully developed, rise only about 3 feet from the dusty ground, and all their branches are heavily laden with tightly packed bunches, many quite 10 inches long. Naturally the dwarf vines want help in supporting such gigantic weights, so here, there, and everywhere they have to be propped up with little canes. After which, for the next few weeks, the burning summer sun of Greece is the chief labourer in the vineyards.

The last week of July finds Nature presenting the magnificent spectacle of the vineyards ripe for harvest. Here is a typical "currant-show." Picture a vast amphitheatre spanning a long line of the sea, with an auditorium of the wildest mountains and an arena of luxuriously fertile plains. Cast your eye over the vineyards. What countless clusters of grapes crowd that one glance! Watch the sun-rays peering into the depths of the leaves, and discovering more, more, and ever more masses of cluster-grapes. Now look up at the desert mountains. In all the wide landscape bounded by your horizon there is not a soul in sight. Presently you spy a few little houses looking down at you over a precipice; far away to the right a few more poor-looking cottages burrowing in the bosom of a hill; a long, long way to the left a few more straggling hovels sleeping under the shadow of a rock. Are you not wondering whether these scattered villages can possibly be hiding enough people to pick the myriad bunches of currant-grapes in time to prevent the fruit rotting where it hangs? Anyway, it must be quite time the pickers were beginning their work! It is time, and in a day or two they will be trooping down the sterile mountain-sides to reap the rich harvest of the plains.



SPREADING CURRANTS TO DRY. Page 66.

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CHAPTER XIII

CURRENT LAND (*continued*)

THE peasants of each village come down from the mountains in a band, under the charge of a head-man. They collect in the market-place or café square of some central, civilized quarter in the neighbourhood of the plains, whither come the vineyard proprietors who require pickers. Here they are engaged in batches through their leader.

The smaller peasant proprietors gather in their own harvest, with the help of their family; so in the little vineyards you see boys and girls helping father and mother pick grapes. But children are not hired by employers of labour, who demand highly skilled workers; for if their fruit is not carefully picked, the crop will be less profitable. Some of the hidden bunches cannot ripen till the vines have been partially despoiled, and these must be left for a second or even third picking-over of the vineyards. As the unpractised eye gets dimmed by the continuous glare of the sun, the inexperienced hand of the most conscientious child-picker is tempted to gather unripe fruit.

Harvest begins about August 1. As the grapes are gathered they are put into baskets. The piled-up baskets are shouldered by men and women, who carry them to the drying-ground, where the grapes will soon assume that blue-black disguise under which you know them full well by the name of currants.

There is nothing artificial in the preparation of cur-

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rants. The grapes are spread out either on wooden trays or on a bare patch of ground, and dried wholly by the sun. The trays are one of the very few signs that Greece has ever heard of any improvements being made in agricultural implements and appliances since the long-ago days of their illustrious ancestors! Cheap contrivances as they are for guarding against the damage and consequent loss incurred by a shower of rain falling on the drying currants, these trays are only used by the more advanced proprietors of the bigger vineyards. At night they are stacked up into piles, each pile being roofed with a gabled wooden covering.

But in many of the vineyards the fruit is spread out to dry on Mother Earth in long, narrow strips. Each strip has its canvas covering a few inches above the ground, all ready to be run along a central pole and pegged down. The covering is always spread and secured in this way at nights, so that the plains are then dotted over with dwarf tents, which make them look like the camping-ground of a Liliputian army. But so primitive are the conditions of labour in Greece that the canvas used is not even proper tarpaulin, so if there should be a very heavy downpour the currant-tents soon get saturated, and the fruit suffers badly in consequence.

In fine weather the fruit dries in about eight days. The currants are now flicked with little brooms to detach them from the main stems. They are next passed through a winnowing-machine, from which they emerge each still clinging to its own little stalk. Winnowing is the last stage to which the business of currant production is carried on in the vineyards, and four-fifths

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of the whole crop are shipped abroad for domestic service in this condition.

The harvesters have a very long working-day of about fourteen hours—from sunrise to sunset—but they are allowed an interval of about three hours in the middle of the day, when the intense heat compels a total cessation of work throughout the country. From noon till three in the afternoon all the shops are closed in the towns, and out of doors is all deserted for the coolest corners that can be found within the shelter of closely shuttered houses. But although the peasants in the vineyards are free to rest from their labours, there are no houses near in which they can seek shade ; so they sit down on the ground, have a simple meal of dry bread, fruit, and a little wine, and then, falling naturally into some graceful posture, hide their eyes, and indulge in a siesta.

After the day's work is done they dance till midnight. By " dancing " you must understand that two men each hold an end of a pocket-handkerchief, and more men join up hands in a row to one of them. The last of these holds another pocket-handkerchief by one end, and, whilst a woman takes another end of it with one hand, more women join up hands in a row to her. The line of dancers bends into a semicircle ; then, chanting a melancholy folk-story, they play a game of " Follow my leader," with slow and stately steps round and round, and he breaks the monotony a little by gyrating under the handkerchief held up with his second-in-command. When the end of one dirge is reached, the peasants have a choice of about thirty other equally popular and equally long folk-stories to process to in the same way.

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At the close of the evening's entertainment the pickers go to sleep for the night. Two or three may find shelter under a tree here and there, a few may seek the hospitality of a rustic store-hutch, open to the front and one side, enclosed with a back-wall and one side-wall of trellised vine-branches, and thatched with an "open roof" of vine-leaves; but there is not very much room to lie down among the baskets and brooms. Most of them throw themselves down to slumber peacefully somewhere, anywhere, beneath the open sky.

After the harvest has been gathered in, and the sun has dried all the fruit, there follow the bustle and excitement of selling the crop. Everyone wants to get rid of his currants as quickly as possible, for there is no storage accommodation for them in the near neighbourhood of the vineyards.

Here is a peasant getting ready to take his currants for sale to the nearest market. He packs them in panniers and sacks, saddles his mules, and loads up for the journey. Each mule can carry a total weight of from two hundred to three hundred pounds, and as our peasant friend is only a small proprietor, his crop weighs about two tons; so he sets out with a procession of twenty mules. But you can hardly see the little beasts. Each has piled-up panniers and bulging saddle-bags hung all over his back, and an odd fat sack is strapped on to the saddle. With the peasant are his wife, one or two of their sons, and possibly a hired help, all going to lend a hand in unloading.

Directly to the merchants, or indirectly to them through a middleman, the greater part of the currant crop of Greece is disposed of within the course of a few

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days after harvest-close. The fruit has now to be transferred to the warehouses, which are in the four great centres of the currant export trade—Corinth, Vostitza, and Patras, on the Gulf of Corinth, for the currants grown in the surrounding districts, which produce the finest quality fruit; and Kalamata, on the Gulf of Messenia, in the far south, where the crops are most abundant.

Most of the currants are conveyed from the provincial ports to the export centres in gaily-coloured boats, in shape rather like a Chinese junk. They are shot loose into the hold, and when the boats reach their destination the cargo is discharged by being shovelled out with wooden spades into sacks and baskets. Some of the currants come up from the country in long, narrow carts drawn by mules. This, too, is a picturesque mode of transport, for the carts are often brightly painted, and the mules have their heads decorated with gorgeous bead-trappings.

CHAPTER XIV

CURRENT LAND (*continued*)

HERE is a glimpse of the commercial scene on the quay of the important currant port of Patras during the busy export month of September. The wharf is thick with black "mud"—a sticky mass of currants piled up by overflowing sacks and barrows, and stamped down by the press of feet. Backwards and forwards, in and out, and round about stacks of packing-cases, moves a constant

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coloured cartons. A "hand" fastens up one end of a carton, and wraps a sheet of grease-proof paper over the square body of a funnel, which she places within the cardboard box. The body of the funnel exactly fits the body of the box, but its little round neck stretches up and out to a wide-open mouth above the open top of the carton. At this stage of the proceedings the carton is handed to a companion, who scoops up currants from a trough by her side, shoots them down the funnel, and withdraws the latter, handing an overflowing box to the third member of the group in which she is working. Number three places the box on a pound-weighted pair of scales, throws redundant currants back into the trough till the scales balance evenly, and then closes up the carton. These pound cartons are packed in sets of thirty-six into wooden cases by men-packers, who do all the heavier warehouse work. The best customers for the ready-cleaned, ready-weighed currants are Canada and Australia; for, as these Colonies of ours suffer severely from a dearth of servants, they appreciate any domestic labour-saving device.

The country that imports the most currants in proportion to her population is Holland; but the national customer who purchases the greatest bulk of the fruit, cleaned and uncleaned, is England, who annually takes about three-fifths of the total crop sold by Greece.

I have already roughly indicated to you how the currant harvest affects a large part of the peasant population of Greece, and how, indirectly, it affects the national prosperity of the whole country through the medium of taxation; but its influence is still farther-reaching than you guess. When the harvest is a good one, the doctors

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may hope to get their outstanding accounts settled ; when it is a poor one, the lawyers have to wait for their fees, and the tradesmen for their bills to be paid.

Yet, in spite of the fact that Greece depends on her currants as her main source of wealth, she treats them with scorn when it comes to a question of eating them herself. You will hardly believe me when I assure you that you might more reasonably expect to meet " Spotted Dick " at an English Royal dinner-party than to find a single currant in anything served at any meal in any class of Greek household. So struck was I by the way currants are conspicuous by their absence from the ingredients of everything in the national menu that one morning I explored Patras for the express purpose of seeing whether I could discover anyone who sold anything with currants in it. With the millions of currants of the year's harvest dogging my footsteps in the sticky mud that clung to my shoes as I crossed the quay, I started on my quest. Low and high I searched the town, through main-streets and side-turnings I wandered, peering into every possible and impossible shop. High and low I searched even more thoroughly on my circuitous way back to the quay, baffled into such a ridiculously thorough mood that once I suddenly became conscious that I was earnestly looking for buns in a linen-draper's window ! Just as I was being forced to the conclusion that Patras sold nothing whatever to eat with currants in it, I spied in a grimy little open window of a tiny side-street general stores some coarse parodies of halfpenny rolls with a few lost-stolen-or-strayed-looking currants diving into their midst.

Yet so prolific are the vineyards that Greece produces

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far more currants than she can sell. It is all very well for her to try hard, as she is doing, to persuade other nations to buy more of them, as there is no denying that they are the cheapest of all dried fruits, a very pleasing delicacy, and a most wholesome and nutritious form of food ; but surely it would be better for her own stomach's sake, as well as her pocket's sake, to say nothing of loyalty and the advertisement of example, if she began to eat some of her annual surplus of currants, instead of pulping the whole of the over-supply into syrup and raw spirit at a dead loss.

CHAPTER XV

NATIVE INDUSTRIES

Most of the industries of Greece are closely connected with agriculture. After currants, her most valuable crops are numerous other varieties of grapes—many, such as muscatels, of a fine quality—olives, tobacco, figs, and valonia, all of which figure prominently in her export trade.

From her grapes she makes wine, taking care not to put resin into any that is to be sold out of the country. Some, too, she dries into raisins ; and there are some of a long, white, seedless kind, a little larger than the currant-grapes, which are quite familiar to you in their dried condition under the name of sultanas. From her olives she manufactures oil. Her valonia, a species of acorn, is in great demand for tanning purposes on account of the tannin it contains.

Native Industries

Some of the most flourishing manufactures of the country owe their origin to the currant industry. Greece makes all her own packing-cases, from wood felled in Greek forests. She also manufactures all the coloured cartons for the pound packets of cleaned currants, and does all the printing on them of decorative trade-marks, special-brand names, and various devices calculated to win customers for the fruit packed by any particular merchant.

Some wool, cotton, and silk are also produced, but they do not constitute any considerable source of wealth. Rugs and silk scarves are the most characteristic native industries to which such commodities contribute. An effort is being made to revive the dying industry of embroidery, but the pioneer work in this direction is being carried on under great difficulties. Unfortunately, the women of the country who are not forced by circumstances to perform the coarser kinds of labour are taught to look upon any kind of work as beneath their dignity ; so, although it is a matter for regret, it is not a matter for wonder that Greece cannot boast of any flourishing fine-art branch of female labour.

There are two important native industries in connection with the home trade. The one is the making of boots and shoes, which are well cut and of good leather. Some are of the Western pattern, but the majority are the typically Greek red shoes with black pompons. The other articles made for home use are earthen amphoræ, or water-jugs. Near the spring at Amarousi, whence drinking-water is carried into Athens, there is a potters' field, where the work of moulding amphoræ is busily carried on. These jars are made from the same kind of red clay as was used to form the beautiful ancient Greek vases.

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Mining affords occupation to a small proportion of the population, and some of the ores found, notably lead and zinc, are exported. The emery mines of Naxos are valuable, and it is from this island in the *Ægean* Sea that we get emery-paper. One of the most important mining districts of Greece is at Laurium, a two and a half hours' train journey from Athens. Here a considerable number of ancient shafts have been found, and the mines now worked produce lead and galena (sulphide of lead), as well as some silver.

The most important non-metallic mineral is marble, in which Greece is remarkably rich. To the finely grained, beautifully veined marbles of this country we owe much of the beauty of old Greek buildings. As the chief material at the command of the ancient Greek builders, it was used unsparingly for all the most important works undertaken by them, and by reason of its solidarity it influenced the whole style of Greek architecture by its natural tendency to demand purity of line. Several of the most important marble-quarries in Greece to-day were worked by the ancients, and it seems as though they could be worked for ever without their supply being exhausted.

The most beautiful of the Greek marbles is the fine-grained, pure white variety found in the island of Paros, whence it takes its name of Parian marble. The Pentelic marble of Mount Pentelicus is as white as the Parian, but it is of coarser grain. The bluish-white marble of Mount Hymettus is still quarried, and other marbles of various and variegated colours are obtained from many other districts in the mainland and islands.

In the olden days marble was laboriously hewn out of

Native Industries

the quarries by slaves, blasting not then being known. In some of the quarries you can still see the marks of the ancient tools. But go now to the large modern Greek quarries on Pentelicus, and what do you find? They are worked by a company, which run up their own train and trucks. The marble is blown up by dynamite. There is a specially constructed slide for the blocks to run down. The processes of chipping, cutting, smoothing, sawing, and polishing are scientifically carried on. The new methods are up-to-date, but no new quarrying methods could produce finer results than the very old ones of the ancient Greeks. The marble exported far and wide from the Greek quarries of to-day is very valuable, in that it is a source of wealth to Greece, but let us not be practical to the point of view of forgetting how still more valuable is the marble that came from those quarries in days gone by. To Greece the work of her old builders has made her old marble a priceless national asset. I wonder will anyone so labour with the new material that one day it, too, will be beyond money and beyond price?

CHAPTER XVI

FESTIVAL SCENES

IN Athens, on New Year's Day and Independence Day, March 25, the King, Queen, and Royal Family attend a Thanksgiving Service at the cathedral. They drive in state from the Royal Palace, and are the central figures of a very brilliant spectacle. The King's coach-

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men are resplendent in blue and silver livery, the officers' uniforms colour the picture with bright splashes of scarlet, and the blue and white feathers of the gracefully nodding plumes on the full-dress helmets contribute liberally to the colour and movement of the whole stirring scene.

When Athens keeps Carnival she appears to change into fancy dress, and to adapt herself to the strange conditions of an organized fête. As a matter of fact, it is then that she casts aside a borrowed civilization, and becomes more like her natural, national self. Now you see children in the national Greek dress, and their nurses in native costume. The Greek national dress is, as I have told you, always a close adaptation of the Albanian; but numerous are the costumes of the Greek islands, and nurse may be arrayed in any gorgeous attire which happens to be typical of home to her. A feature of the Carnival is a performing camel, whose entry on to any part of the scenes is announced by the merry clatter of a tambourine. What matter if this frolicsome beast is stuffed with men who control his antics? He is a dear, funny beast, whatever is inside him, and the children love him. "Dance, camel, and I will give you apples!" they sing to him; and they feed him with pennies.

Megara, within easy reach of Athens, is famous for the dancing that takes place there on the hill and in the market-square every Easter Tuesday. This dancing is very much like that which I described to you as taking place in the currant vineyards at the close of the day's work, only the Megarans are professional dancers as compared with other Greek peasants who indulge in the pastime.

Festival Scenes

Easter Tuesday is the day of days for the marriageable village maidens of Megara, for it is then that they dance for a husband! Each girl dresses herself for the occasion in a handsomely embroidered costume, and puts on a gold-edged gauze veil; but, however gorgeous her raiment, however irresistible her natural beauty, the charm to which she pins all her faith is the chain-dowry of solid gold coins which she puts round her neck and in her hair. For generation after generation that dowry has been handed down from mother to daughter, gradually increasing in value as from time to time enough money has been saved to change into another gold coin to add to necklace or fillet.

As the maidens dance the men watch them, each intently looking for the one that shall take his fancy. When any one of the men makes his momentous decision he signifies the same by throwing his handkerchief on the maid he wishes to wed, and she is by custom bound to marry him.

An important part of the education of every Megaran girl is the training of her for her mating-dance. It so happened that, while I was in Athens, some little Megaran maidens gave a special rehearsal for my benefit

I had expressed a wish to visit some one of the best girls' schools in the city. The Greek professor to whom I mentioned the matter arranged an introduction to a head-mistress, from whom I soon learnt that dancing was a prominent feature of the school curriculum, her pupils being taught by a famous professor who had written a book on the subject of Greek national dances. Would I like to see some of these dances? Naturally I was delighted at the prospect. A messenger was des-

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patched to the roof of the school-house, where the children were having a game, and I was conducted to the playground leading out of the garden. Here in a few minutes the whole school was mustering to do me honour. Big girls, middle-sized girls, little girls, tiny tots, out they filed from under a veranda, each one coming out into the open looking still more shy than the one before. When they were all grouped before me we exchanged greetings, and the head-mistress then proceeded to single out about twenty girls. They joined up hands in a row to two specially selected leaders, who each held an end of a handkerchief. Twisting and turning under the handkerchief, the leaders corkscrewed round and round the playground, wailing the while a melancholy ditty, which was echoed by all the others faithfully corkscrewing in their very slow steps. One national dance after another they showed me, but all were very similar, and at the risk of sounding ungrateful and ungracious I must confess that the whole performance impressed me as being dreary and monotonous. The girls created by their voices and steps a perfect harmony. There was no suggestion of pose or affectation in their manner, and at first I felt the full charm of simplicity in their very graceful movements; but after a time I could not help regretting that their dancing did not seem to give them the slightest opportunity of expressing the joy of life.

The performance closed with an extra-special "turn." The head-mistress proudly informed me that among her pupils were some girls from Megara. They were going to show me the Easter Tuesday dance. It turned out to be similar to all the other Greek dances, in that it was a



DONKEYS LADEN WITH BRUSHWOOD.

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Festival Scenes

slow procession to a wailing accompaniment ; but the easy carriage, graceful movements, and light steps of the performers were particularly noticeable, and each girl's feet seemed to slip into well-defined positions of their own artistic accord. They were such pretty little Megaran maids who danced their best to give me pleasure. I wanted to kiss them all my thanks, and at the same moment I longed to beg Greece release them from the bonds of that social custom by which they were destined a few years later to dance for a home, and bound to take as husband any man who chose to throw his handkerchief on them. I left the playground with my heart full of good wishes for them that, when their Easter Tuesday came, luck would enchant the handkerchief that fell on each, so that they might all love and be loved, as well as mated, fed, clothed, and housed.

CHAPTER XVII

TRAVELLING IN GREECE

Before the war with Turkey, Greece was completely isolated by land from the rest of Europe; but in 1916, the railway was completed between Gida on the Salonica-Monastir line, and Papapuli, on the Thessalian frontier, a distance of 56 miles, whereby Greece was linked up with the European railroads. The main track and branch lines in the Peloponnesus give access to such historic spots and commercial centres as Athens, Eleusis, Megara, Corinth, Patras, Olympia, Kalamata, Mycenæ, Argos, Tiryns, and Nauplia.

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But do not imagine that wherever there are railways in Greece there are trains at your service. Expresses are rare luxuries, and frequently you are too late for the last of the two ordinary trains a day if you put off going to the station till the cool of the afternoon. My experience in picking up connections was that the service provided offered a choice between spending the night in the most primitive of inns and going on my way in the early hours of the next morning, or hurrying over an excursion, tripper fashion, and rushing back to the station in the hottest part of the day, as fast as my feet would carry me over stony mountains, so as to catch the only train back to the town which I had made my headquarters for the time being.

You can form a good idea of the accommodation available for a traveller stranded at a little place on the line if I describe a wayside station to you—a mere shed, opened for a few minutes once, or at the most twice, a day, when a train is signalled, by an official in his shirt-sleeves, who combines the duties of station-master, booking-clerk, ticket-collector, goods-clerk, porter, and general factotum. But his multifarious duties do not include any help to a traveller leaving or entering a railway-carriage. It is the passenger's own business to lift and carry anything and everything he chooses to keep with him as hand-luggage.

The first and second class railway-carriages are comfortable, but they could not be called luxurious. The third-class compartments! I do not want to exaggerate; they are not cattle-trucks: they are farmyards and barracks combined. The seats are generally packed with soldiers. In this part of the world soldiers always seem

Travelling in Greece

to be wandering about from place to place looking for their regiment. Sandwiched here and there between the military are peasant farmers and labourers, a few peasant women, and perhaps a priest. The floor is littered with bags of provisions, hampers and sacks of fruit and vegetables *en route* to market, someone's bird in a cage, and a baby or two. The rack overhead is crowded with live fowls tied together by the legs, and if you happen to stretch your cramped feet under the seat, there are chickens there to peck at you as a warning not to encroach again. The very long compartments have open partitions, so the men in the division at one end can easily talk to their friends in that at the other far end by shouting at the top of their voices, or the whole party in a compartment can join in dirging national ditties in the intervals of eating melons and strewing the pips on the floor. Well trained as I have been by third-class travelling in such countries as Italy, Sicily, and Spain, I found that a five or six hours' journey in a third-class Greek railway-carriage became in its last stages a sheer test of endurance.

But for all the little hardships, which, as they were prolonged, grew to assume the proportions of nerve-racking trials at the time of facing them, I shall again travel third class when next I go to Greece; for when I am wandering I like to be in touch with the heart of a country I am in, and the heart of Greece is its peasant population. In travelling with the peasants I grew to know them more intimately than I should otherwise have done, and I long to meet again all the kind friends who shared their fruit with me, gave me flowers, put me in a corner seat, stood up to make more room for me, fetched

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refreshments for me from the wayside-station stalls, and lifted my portmanteau in and out of the carriage. And particularly would I like to meet again the very polite "common" soldiers, more especially the kind soldierman who was nearly left behind at a village station in his determined efforts to get me something to drink, who gallantly but shyly insisted on paying for the same out of his own poor pocket, who silenced his boon companions so that I might snatch a little sleep, of which I was sorely in need, and who, faithful to his voluntary promise, woke me up as I reached my destination. His method consisted in tapping my shoulder gently with the butt-end of his rifle.

Although it is possible to go by rail to many of the most interesting spots in Greece, there are very many famous places far away from any railroad yet laid or even projected. To some of the isolated localities you can drive, to others you must ride, and to most you have to walk part, if not all, the way. Good roads are few and far between. The highways are nearly all narrow, rough-hewn thoroughfares across the plains; the by-ways mere mule-tracks taking a short cut through the valleys, or zig-zagging for a long climb up the hills.

Sailing-boats and steamers ply between various places on the mainland coast and cross to the islands; and if you prefer to cover the whole distance between Patras and Athens by water rather than by land, you can do so by steamer to or from the Piræus, the port of Athens, in which case you will have the interesting experience of going through the Corinth Canal. Schemes for cutting through the isthmus of Corinth were projected by the ancients, and the first attempt to carry out the idea was

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made in the time of Nero, but the work was abandoned after a few months. The present canal was begun in 1881 by a French company, and finished by a Greek company. It was opened on November 9, 1893. It is $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles long, 100 feet wide, and 26 feet deep. The banks of the cutting rise about 160 feet above the water at their highest point, where the canal is spanned by a railway-bridge. Unfortunately, the width of the canal has proved insufficient for large steamers, so this short cut is only used by the smaller coasting-vessels.

To round off your general idea of what travelling in Greece is like, I must tell you about a voyage I made on a native steamer. But before doing so I must assure you that I did not view the experience through the jaundiced eyes of a bad sailor. The sea and I are the best of friends, both in sunshine and storm.

Here, then, is my experience of a night on a Greek steamer :

As I had made up my mind to travel in the native way in Greece, it was my duty to myself to go second class on the boat. Third class on the steamers is pure tramp travelling. It means sleeping with the cargo in the hold, and all the available space is generally occupied by itinerant Turks, such as you sometimes see wandering about in England with a pack of rugs and embroideries for sale. They cook their own food, and sleep in any hole or corner between the bales and boxes without taking off their clothes. But the average Greek does not travel in the hold ; he goes second class on the steamers. I meant to do the same. I went on board about nine at night, and asked for the second-class saloon. I was shown into a narrow passage littered from floor to

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ceiling with luggage—that is to say, the kind of luggage people have when they are shifting their entire abode, including household goods and live-stock. Jammed in between the goods and chattels was a long table—a bare board strewn with the débris of supper, odd fragments and chunks of black bread, lumps of sour-smelling goat's-milk cheese, grape-stalks, fig-skins, melon-rind, and piles of melon-pips. My one and only glance did not reveal a stool or a seat of any kind, but there were dozens of people sitting and reclining on bulging bags, huge sacks, and gaily-painted boxes. Some of the passengers were finishing their supper among the packages, babies were screaming, women chattering, parrots babbling, and the air was thick with smoke. I asked for the ladies' cabin, thinking my best plan was to retire for the night with the utmost speed. I was shown into a tiny cupboard, or, to tell the exact truth, I took a cautious peep in at the door. The scene that met my gaze beggars description. The outstanding feature was a dishevelled creature raising herself upon an elbow from a dirty-looking bunk, and leering at me with her one eye. I fled to the first-class part of the boat, settled up with the steward for the difference in the fare, and took a look round. Oh yes; there were seats here, cushioned sofas running round the saloon, but they were all occupied—fully occupied—by cockroaches! I thought it wiser to bear with the ills already facing me rather than step farther down into the bowels of the ship to sample the first-class ladies' cabin; so I took up a stool, shook off its present occupants, and sat down before a table. I tried to write, seeking oblivion in work, but of all the cockroaches I have ever met, my present shipmates were the most inquisitive.

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They walked over my paper, lodged on my pen, ran up my arms, and perched on my shoulders, till at last, in sheer desperation, I dropped my head on the table, hid my eyes, and, worn out by a very long day's rough walking, fell asleep.

Anyone who sets much store by comfort, and has ample means for indulging a craving for being as much "at home from home" as possible, can travel about Greece under more luxurious conditions than I have described. He can sail from port to port, from island to island, in his own yacht, or make one of a party sharing a specially chartered vessel. He can stay at one of the first-class cosmopolitan hotels in Athens, and he can make elaborate camping arrangements for penetrating the interior under the auspices of a first-class dragoman.

But the born wanderer, the real traveller, wants heart and soul to see a country under normal native conditions ; and as it was under such conditions that I thought you would best like to see Greece, I have not in any case made the road to its delights unnaturally easy for you.

Modern Greece has made good use of her independence in many ways. She has recognized the part played by education in the matter of progress, and so developed her scholastic system that she has the smallest illiterate populace in Eastern and Southern Europe ; she has built railways, made roads, established good postal and telegraphic communication, and organized a merchant fleet of considerable importance. But apart from her merchant service, the railways I have mentioned, and a few first-class hotels, her traffic arrangements are very primitive, the interior of the country in particular being in a most elementary stage of civilization. You must not

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forget, however, that Greece is a rugged, mountainous country, which naturally rebels against civilization, and that therein lies her power of fascination. To see her as she now is you must be prepared to "rough it," and when the way is made smoother she will have lost some of her natural beauty, much of her old-world charm.

For any discomfort I had to put up with I was repaid a thousandfold by the wildly romantic, peacock-hued scenery; by the friendly manners, odd customs, and quaint costumes of the people; by the magnificent remains of ancient buildings that stand on classic soil amidst marvellous natural surroundings; and by the wondrous old art treasures that are housed in the homeland which gave birth to the life wherein they once played a part.

It may be my fault or your misfortune if this peep at Greece through my eyes has made you feel that you do not want to see her with your own eyes till she is tamed by roads, and there is a mountain railway to take you up Delphi; but if you are longing at any cost to see her for yourself just as she is to-day, then I have succeeded in the difficult task of doing her some justice, and that only by your help, by the sympathy between us which makes for understanding what words and pictures can never hope to express.

THE END









